

~ IN THE ~ COUNTRY GOD FORGOT

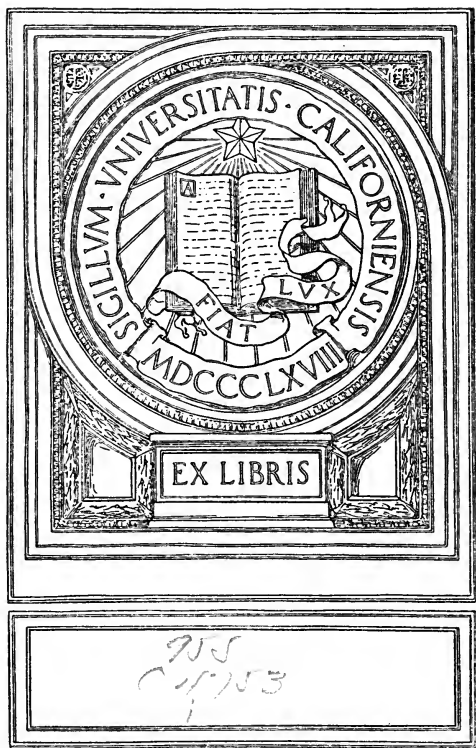
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BY
FRANCES CHARLES

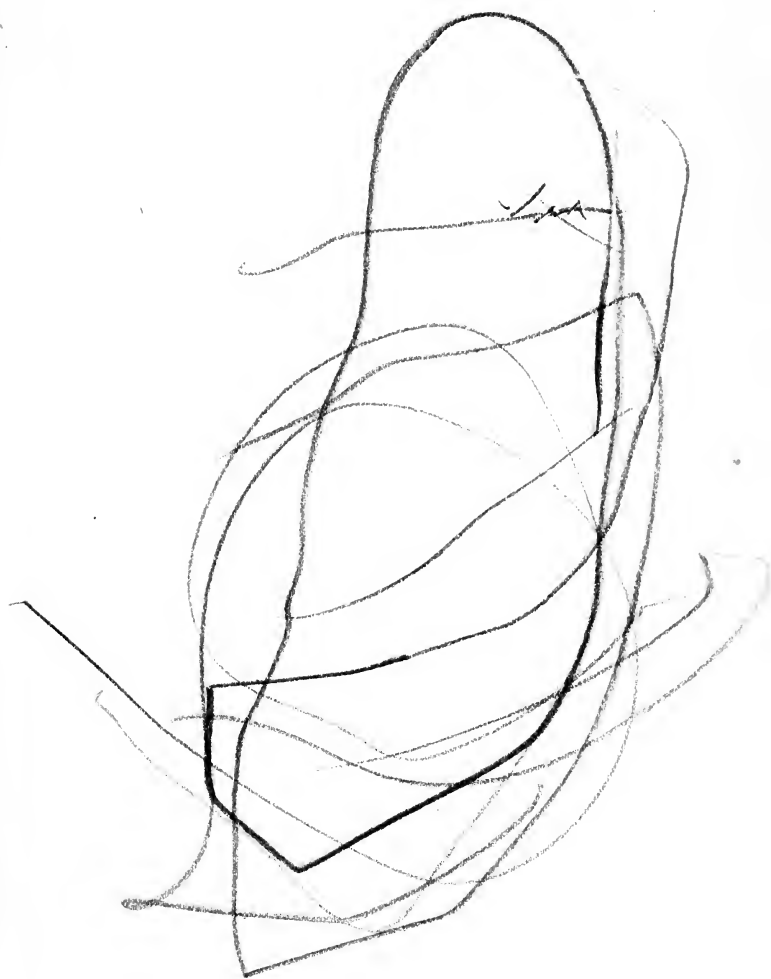


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Mr. T. J. Carter







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In the Country God Forgot



In the Country God Forgot

A STORY OF TO-DAY

By

FRANCES CHARLES

*Author of "The Siege of Youth," "The Awakening
of the Duchess," etc.*



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*To that which has abided through many years,— the
influence of my sister's life*

“When good men die their goodness does not perish,
But lives though they are gone”



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In the Country God Forgot

PART FIRST

MEES BAX

ONE day, in a year of our Lord which is too recent as yet to mention, a woman stood in the doorway of Carl Weffold's adobe. She was staring out on the God-forgotten country which people have baptized Arizona. During this long trailing survey of her hot, handsome eyes, it were well to study the cactus land, as reflected.

The utter silences of working-time wrapped her in a sort of desolation which seemed to make her throbbing distaste of immediate surroundings doubly dumb, for there are some things we should not say, even have we listeners for them.

She was also pale, as one still listless from a too hot summer. Complexion and manner both implied this. I think, too, this impression was heightened by the simple black gown that she wore, — like one of mourning.

In the same manner, eyes and height alike proclaimed her no native of Arizona. For there was in one the stretching heimweh of some goodly

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distance, while the form half propped against the sturdy post was as divinely tall as the proverbial goddess.

Her drab, hopeless personality became more and more fixed as one gazed upon her. There was naturally the suggestion of such conflicts as are inevitable when alien bodies meet; but more than this seemed suggested, the sacrifices attending assimilation. For what we have lost is still often ours by its very absence.

She knew many things as she leaned there. She let thoughts come, and then despised herself for their recurrence — woman-like. It is women who represent your endless variety. They make playthings of their own emotions. So with Mees Bax that day. She exulted now over the Weffold possessions. She seemed to hold in a measure the future mighty issues of both cattle and land; her woman's heart throbbed with the gladness and pity, femininely intermingled, attendant on owning great water-rights in a famishing country.

It was a womanly face with this tender phase of feeling on it, but presently were also blent the breathless remembrances of her own little romance, the majesties of her labor and motherhood.

She stretched her arms a little, as one stirring

Mees Bax

in a pleasant trance. She tried to raise her contrite eyes to Heaven, as located to our childish minds. But even so, half-way — wandering, tender, sentimental — there came a chilling negativeness to them.

It was the Major coming along his own high-road. His meagre hair fell under his wide white sombrero, long and gray; his keen eyes under their bushy brows were impenetrably cold as ever; over a noticeable hollowness of chest rested the long quiet beard. Otherwise, he was very erect for his age, and rather tall,—in all very much like any other seventy-year-old soldier.

Robbie was Mees Bax's sister who lived in Chicago, and wrote long, intolerant-of-the-country society-letters to Weffold's once a week. She had been the kind of person one called incorrigible as a little girl and totally charming as a big one. The only sad part to this fact was that she knew it.

"Your description of your father-in-law, my dear," she would write, "reminds me forcibly of the wooden soldiers on frame-work which we used to play with when we were young. They used to be very irritating, only I did n't know it then. We had to stand them up to begin with, and then knock them over before they fell,—it is too automatic: not human enough for humans — don't you think?"

Mrs. Bax would write back on these occasions:

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"Your remarks about my father-in-law, dearest, were not nice. For one thing, I don't remember what we thought as children, and for another, I don't think — now —" After a sufficient period to justify distance and the mail, Mrs. Bax would open six or seven thin, closely-scribbled sheets. "The worst fault," she would read, "of the country is, it obliterates personality so effectually in time, — just like boarding-houses and marriage," — every extra-expressive adverb, verb, etc., being English capitalized.

"You are an absorption, not an entity. Something is at work on your individuality lately. I can't believe Bax guilty of it. I think it is your father-in-law."

On such occasions the woman who was reading would stir and grow restless, and seem to yearn over this thing which, 't was said, was slipping from her. Seated in her queer little room, perhaps she would stare around her, as if seeking satisfaction for her queries, peace for her wonder, recovery of her own.

And staring back at her often on these occasions from bed, chair, child's crib, or bureau would be a woollen elephant, — solemn, inanimate, well-handled, on one side the strong smell of peppermint candy, but compensatory beyond all doubt — Do I need to tell you any more?

Mees Bax

As Mees Bax turned aside now, her recent intimate and innocent reflections became so familiar as to turn her heart sick at the mere remembrance of them.

For the country God forgot, with its limits, its calm and barrennesses, found a certain imitation of its sterility here.

A bitter agony of revolt possessed her.

"It is unbearable," Mees Bax muttered.

It was in the hallway.

She walked slowly. She drank punishingly of her humiliation; she bent her proud head now in shame; she raised it again in burning wrath.

Two spots glowed on either side of her face. Out of her mental rage she mastered the great facts of the house and her presence.

Presently she reached a room wherein a little child was playing. He did not see her just at first, but when he did, his face lighted. He did not discard the mucilage pot from which he had been procuring amusement, but, with the liberality of our young affections, accepted both pleasures with a quaint complacency.

As his mother continued, he even tried to solve her mood by his own autocratic measures, and successful as they generally were, the little deliberate voice cooled the bitterness of the problem for her.

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"Me luv oo," it said; "come 'ere, me 'ont to 'ug oo."

She understood. It was manlike consolation enough, — embryonic, as you will. In a wild whirl of true feminine submission, she flung herself on her knees beside him. Her head leaned on Carl Weffold's broad bed; she knelt on Carl Weffold's floor; his roof covered both her and her offspring.

Her head seemed to burst with its helplessness over the complexities of her own misplacement.

She, the woman who most despised him, the woman he most despised, the wife and mother of his heirs —

As she continued sobbing, the child forgot his mucilage pot. It became secondary, and, upsetting, flowed over her rich dark hair. Seeing this, he patted the damp places gently with a furtive entertainment in it of which he was probably not even aware. His little fat hand came to glisten kindly. Once it closed tightly around her neck. Between whiles he called, "Mommie, mommie, mommie — dear!"

THE ROMANCE OF HOPE

THE "West Bound" rolled through Short's at four o'clock in the morning. Short's was not much of itself, save that it held solitary railroad communication with the lively little town of Hope, some twenty miles or so distant.

There had been no Short's, or Hope either, till the third summer or so before. People just called that part of the country "Weffold's Range." It was a vague, yet comprehensive, term which took in more square miles than a man could do in a day on horseback. This dated back farther than history. Before man had set even the foot of possession firmly in Arizona, Carl Weffold's Range had existed. He had come in the midst of the worst Apache warfare; he had defied them with but one friend, his rifle; he had stood by the country through drought and famine, until now he stood hand in hand with its progress,—a stern old pioneer of the waste of sand hills.

But in this God-forgotten country there are signs, as all know, in His emulation. Thus, so

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that limit might be placed to the Weffold pastures, nature had thrown up her barren hills in rude, compelling fences. The Major, content with his own little kingdom, stopped at these uplifted hands of authority.

Then one day a tramp came along — a weary, happy-go-lucky fellow. He had a little prospector's pack on his back, and much of the divine grace which is laid to the sum of a prince in some ancient story. He laughed now and again as he kicked up the dust ; he whistled as he toiled alongside the barbed-wire fence which guarded the Weffold tanks and its pastures, its great herds of cattle and well-built corrals. Once he raised his tattered cap with mocking grace to some stampeding cattle. The day was perfect, and he lent himself charmingly to harmony.

He stopped at the gate leading to Maj'r Wef-fold's adobe. It swung by a homemade contrivance of two tin cans filled with clods of earth. It was very funny, and afforded a childlike amusement which was nearly French. He was very hungry, but begged neither food nor drink. He chatted lightly, entertainingly, casually to his host. After a whiskey or so, Texan's measure, he approached an even greater perfection of non-chalance. He laughed, and it was good acting. He was a New Yorker — Garnet, by name (with

The Romance of Hope

a bow)—Richard Garnet. Dick was better, merely Dick. It was a good name in his own part of the country.

He would not detain the Maj'r longer. He did not know the length of his own journey. It was toward Hope. Just two hours after he had seen the last of this stranger, the joke penetrated Carl Weffold's mercilessly practical head. He recalled the suave, mocking face, the white, gentlemanly hands, the light, graceful figure, the clever intuitions of the fellow who had just gone, and there came in bitter, overwhelming contrast, Bax's deadly, immovable earnestness and strong, quiet face.

Over that thought, he went to the door, and, as one on whom God had bestowed a fool for his first-born, gulped down the great Nazarene's name in fierce, gurgling wrath.

The stranger slept that night on the hills, the next perhaps, and several more of them.

Two weeks later, a party of strangers put up at Weffold's a gay night or so. The first stranger was there also. He drank whiskey oftener. He seemed more feverish than ever. When their verdict over his find came in, he staggered out of the room at last, like one in liquor, and every one imagined it was so, and that the new protégé of Fortune had gone to sleep it off. In-

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stead of that he went into his bed-room, carefully closing and locking the door. He sat down by a small deal table. He stared a little while drunkenly before him (but not with wine). He stretched out his arms with a strange, yearning gesture, and then suddenly burst into tears, — such as men weep when their strength is gone from them by some treacherous prank such as the emotions can play.

Just seven and one-half days later a letter arrived in New York. It was to a woman. It bore the whimsical trace of joy and grief, futile remorse, and a transfiguration of hope.

She read it, and then went to a drawer in her desk and extracted a blotted, well-handled note, in the same handwriting. She laid the two side by side. As she read them both, her heart beat fast, and a strange film covered her strong, pure eyes. It was impossible to read like that; so she rose to her feet and walked unsteadily to the window. There the birds sang gloriously, as if in a passionate *Te Deum*.

As this woman watched, God put it into the feet of an old, stooped, weary woman to turn a curve in the cottage path beneath her and appear to the onlooker above. A little lad capered well before her, and clinging on to the grandmother's hand was another child. Their laughter mingled

The Romance of Hope

innocently. Obeying the impulse to thank some one, the watcher sank suddenly to her knees.

Meanwhile we will read the tattered letter. It was dated a year before.

It said:—

MY WIFE:—I cannot bear it. Try to forgive me; I am going away. You should have married a man such as Claude will be. Your eyes are the same. What a team you would have made to be sure! What a man he looked the other evening when he turned over his allowance to my account! Has Heaven compensated my mother for one bad son by three such noble fellows as my brothers? I have been a fine executor for his father for him—our father—I still dare to say it—I—gambler, drunkard, forg—nay, fool, my wife.

With your prayers and my burden of desolation I go forth.

DICK.

The note written on Weffold's Range, in old Carl's Spartan empty chamber, was on the back of a scrap of paper he had torn from a book on leaving home. It was like him, as the woman who read it knew. It was soiled and creased, and old and greasy. Probably it had stolen rides on freight trains, been driven out of yards by dogs, been starved and cursed and derided, according to the fortunes of its owner.

“And that I may not make you weep, I have not related the story with tears of blood torn

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from the eyes, as they are torn from my heart by the grief which fills it, at seeing that our line of Yncas is ended, and our empire lost."

Penned below this by the hand with most power of all the earth to make or mar her life, rich with the passion of resurrection, were traced haltingly these words:—

TO THE HOME I ONCE DESOLATED, — MY MOTHER'S, MY CHILDREN'S, MY WIFE'S: — The Garnet mine was incorporated July 27th, at Hope, Arizona. I have been given two hundred thousand for half interest. I want to see my children. Have I earned my welcome home?

DICK.

We have not much to do with him; only it is a pretty story. Hope tells it to the newcomers still. It has been worked into soft, wide-eyed Spanish, where it takes on a more fairy-like atmosphere than is true.

It tells of a tramp become a millionaire in one night near old Carl Weffold's tanks and his pastures and long accumulations by slow German thrift, on the very hills where little Bax Weffold had played and built sand houses in the long ago many and many a time, at the very hour when Bax Weffold, grown, lying fever-struck in smiling San Francisco, heard the sound of the wolf and its claws at his threshold, and in the room with him were wife and child.

The Romance of Hope

But it is not thus sadly that Hope shall end its gay little beginning. Surely not so.

For it is of a man, a woman, two children, and a holiday ramble, that I wish to close this chapter on Dick Garnet's luck and his after life.

Every year, three now, they tell me, these four come of a summer to Hope, and the great team goes to Short's to meet them, and there is great rejoicing throughout the town. But they will have none of this. They mount the crazy, rattling, little stage, which is only a country wagon with one seat behind the one before, and the little heir of nearly entire Garnet climbs alongside Shorty, who is much embarrassed, though a good fifty years.

And the little lad says every summer:—

“And is Short's name af'er you, Mr. Shorty?”

And each summer Shorty claps his hand on his knee and shouts:—

“Gee! just listen—just listen, will yer!” and laughs aloud.

And so they jog on the twenty miles, with innocent, holy pleasure,—this blue-shirted, overalled, awkward man, these lucky little beggars of children, this woman with the kind, noble lines to her face, and this prosperous man whom the devil had captured, but God had claimed again, and great had been the redemption.

And thus they enter the cluster of mining huts

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which man has decreed to call town; and here, in the superintendent's house (which is a fine adobe structure with all sorts of modern improvements, even unto electric lights, so they say), great preparation has been made for them, and the fatted calf (which had once been one of little Don Weffold's well loved possessions) killed, and much else besides.

But this is not to be either. This great family goes to the Palace Hotel, which is two wooden rows of rooms and a respectable hall to join them, and, amidst great rejoicing, because the landlady's horse must needs poke his head wonderingly through the window, the owners and possessors of this throbbing, wonderful mine so near them "put up," in Hope language, here.

And every July, rain or shine, though it is always shine, and too much of it, this marvellous family walks abroad, over the country by Carl Weffold's pastures, past his corrals and his great tanks of water, on to the Garnet mine.

And every year, for he is still a little fellow, little Dick Garnet walks on ahead.

"This," he calls, trudging sturdily over the heated stubbles, "is where funny papa got out of bread and butter, or was it only bread and not butter, papa dear? And this is where the River of Whiskey dried sudden'y up. When a thing do dry up, dear papa, where does it go? And

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this is where Dorothy stumbled las' year, and the year before; and here 's where you kiss mamma like you was sorry, when she cried—an'—an'—”

“I think I shall do it again,” says Dick.

Women are funny creatures. There were prayers and tears and smiles,—all three in her eyes as she raised them, and there was a certain look to his own face which was no work of the devil's,—for all this made Dick a better man. And so Amen to it.

A GU'L

SHORTY was polishing his rusty bridle. He had already washed the wheels of his stage, glaring furtively, from time to time, around him lest Campbell detect this unwonted cleanliness. His face was bent and twisted, as if he imagined his mind was all on his labor, and it was very red. Now and again he conversed with himself about the bridle, yet in a guilty, embarrassed way, as if he feared it or some other self might up and accuse him, if he allowed perfect silence.

"Guess use fine bridles on city horses. Gawd, this is funny; can't tell how it got so brown! Wonder if oughter wear my coat. Pshaw! how silly, don't care. O Laud! never knowed blamed coat was ripped that bad. Damn you for a blazin' fool —"

The horses switched at flies in silence. Presently Campbell appeared. He bespoke sturdy British ancestry. His chest was like a blacksmith's. He had a set, sunburnt face and sunburnt hair. His eyes were pale blue and fastened on some invisible object straight before him as he talked.

A Gu'l

He also wore overalls and a cotton, unornamented shirt. He moralized by a yard-measure method. It just ran out, ending with a click. On such occasions Mr. Campbell was either too angry to continue, or too much out of breath. He did not look at Shorty nor the bridle, the horses nor the stage, but above them and beyond them all.

"A gu'l is going up with us on the stage," he announced.

"Pshaw! Can't be," said Shorty; "who say'd?"

"No one say'd," returned Campbell; "did n't I see her myself?"

"You don't mean it," persisted Shorty; "where did she come from?"

"Offern the train," answered Campbell. He spoke in a thick, British voice.

Shorty's face was bursting. His suspenderless trousers had slipped a bit, and lent him a grotesque stomach. He went perfidiously to the door, and gazed long at an unusual and dainty figure poised on the threshold of the waiting-room.

"Well, I'll be blowed," he said.

Campbell could stand no more of it.

"You seen her, I say," he remarked. His eyes were fixed, but his tone was aggressive.

"I did n't neither. What do you mean?"

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"You did. I seen you pr'parin' to take her up."

Shorty sputtered futilely. His face became more ashamed and purplish.

"'Pears like you are pretty much slicked up yourself," he snapped.

This had to do with Mr. Campbell's cleaner face (if I may so express it) and his wet hair.

Meanwhile the girl in question stepped out of the waiting-room door. She was worth a glance. It was in August then, and the sun, which in an hour or so would steal the acumen of critics entirely, lent a golden friendliness to her beauty now. Her loneliness, as well, seemed under the severe and rather ridiculous protection of that independence peculiar to American maidens, every one of whom is a princess, they say. She was indeed not so very different from the several million princesses of her land. She had neutral hair and eyes, not blonde, nor yet tropic. In fact, just such hair and eyes as American inter-marriage should produce as a result in time. More than this, she wore the cool regulation shirt-waist, the neat dark skirt, and prim, gentlemanly tie. Yet she was very pretty. Sometimes I think it was, after all, her fair, clean skin, more than the straight, true little features. It is nice, in this dried, sallow territory of ours, to see a skin

A Gu'l

like that, smooth as a good grade of satin, and cool as an oasis in a desert, — as if the springs were pure.

At a respectable distance from the house, she said something. It was to the hills, to the few, very few shanties toward which she walked, or to the surrounding ether ; certainly to no living soul, — since Shorty and Mr. Campbell, while admiring her very self, were very invisible while at it, and the person of whom she spoke could hardly be adjudged a reasonable audience for the utterance.

“I hate that man,” was the remark.

That man was twenty feet in the rear. He did not look remarkably guilty of hatred, save that in this great state of bold, free, fine cow-men he wore a coat, a boiled shirt, and a college air. Otherwise, he was made in the usual image ascribed by the chosen to God. He was tall beside the girl (which counts a great deal in this story); his hair, his eyes, his mouth, were much the same as those of his fellows. And as youth was plainly favoring his days, it is safe to presume, in a year or so, he would have a very seemly moustache on that firm upper lip where only poor but eminently respectable hairs appeared occasionally now.

It was not, alas, his rather sallow skin which called public attention to him, as a man, a citizen, or a soul. It was merely that something which, in occasional boyhood, is accounted pure ; in man-

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hood, a strength passing understanding, on which a part of the world must lean. This man, I had better tell it, was in much of his boyhood still. He was very young, perhaps twenty-four.

He was watching the girl before him. He did not know she hated him, but recognized that she was a lady, a very young lady, and he was saying to himself: If she were his daughter (a daughter of his, mind you, at twenty-four), she should not be travelling unprotected.

A very worthy sentiment, however high-strung, we are sure.

The dining-room of the principal, in fact, only hotel of Short's was like a large-sized box of boards planted, impromptu fashion, on mother-earth, open end down, leaving a natural flooring, as you may deduce, which was pleasantly primeval. A tin pan hung outside this resort, upon which Boston Jim and his wife were wont to beat thrice a day with an iron spoon, and thus summon their guests to meals.

The interior of this remarkable building was fully as unique as the exterior. Light, the same golden dawn (for it was still only five) which had enveloped the little stranger, entered by great, kindly-disposed cracks which somehow could not help suggesting their parallel behavior during such a contingency as an ambitious, "up-to-date" thunderstorm.

A Gu'l

A table ran down the middle of the room. As the floor was bumpy, and no attempt had been made to remedy this natural attraction, it wobbled, from time to time, while great flapping sheets of brown wrapping-paper added to the liveliness of the scene. These were amateur attempts at fly-drivers, and were manipulated from time to time by a wire hung from end to end of the room, which the guests stirred solemnly by turns.

A lank curtain was strung across the end of this novel apartment, making a very pretentious kitchen at a very modest cost, say seven or eight yards of crinoline, or crétonne, or other feminine material, such as is turned by women into decoration.

Over a very hot wood stove in this sub-sanctum, Mrs. Boston Jim (may one so convert his title?) prepared flap-cakes, fried eggs, boiled ham, and other edibles inappropriate to hot weather.

On such occasions as when some dashed Mexican dared eat unformulated mixtures, great monetary discussions arose between this gifted couple which were wafted tableward in due time, along with the very compound smell of the cooking.

Meanwhile, out at the hotel proper, the girl had drawn up hesitatingly.

Since it may be disrespectful not to mention this edifice separately, we may say that it was

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evidently built with the same idea of architectural freedom which characterized the dining-room. There were no ignoble pretensions to it like studied lines or paint. In fact, the only way one knew it was the hotel proper was by the door and a man within who was snoring.

Standing forlornly here, staring into the breakfast-room beyond her, with increasing (and very attractive) color, stood the maiden already described.

To her view, through the aperture which modern civilization usually adorns with a door, she saw the table d'hôte of Short's, and many men seated thereat, eating. In fact, so different the process seemed from the studied, conventional meals of her short city existence, that it seemed, to her over-wrought imagination then, that all these men were gobbling.

She was too new to frontier life to know that her mere feminine presence would strike every honest one of them abashed and dumb. A terrible homesickness overcame her. Within twenty miles of her destination, the courage of its two thousand miles' preface melted with overwhelming inconsistency. She felt bold, unwomanly, all of a sudden. She thought miserably of the man who had travelled this long, silent distance with her, and miserably also, as all at once she read what

A Gu'il

his quiet, presumptuously old eyes had said each time they rested on her :

"What can your brother be thinking of?" (Yes, not her mother or father, aunt or older sister, but brother ! And I have to tell you, she struck it ; but you must remember, he was but twenty-four.)

Unfortunately, at this very instant, she raised her eyes, and she saw him — this pedantic, solemn-faced, abominable young man whom she hated — standing before her, bare-headed, as if he had come to her rescue and his own senses at last.

But her heart was hot with wrath (which is a lofty name for mere injured vanity), so she could not stand it any longer. She commenced to speak. Forever after the advantage of temper-dignity was his. (You don't know how much that counts in the matter, especially with your wife. She may commence to scold you. "I told you so," you say. She may rebel against your infallible authority, my friends. "It is only what I expected," and you sigh.)

There is absolutely no limit to what you can do after that.

But the girl did not know just at this moment that she might become the young stranger's wife. It was certainly unspeculative, — to an unfeminine degree, — now one stops to think of it.

But to go on —

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Seated at proper distances, in some proper parlors, with the very proper sisters of some of his college friends, he had never come very near the little humannesses of girlhood.

Nor had the women of his household assisted this ignorance of his, noble as had been his service to them, — a mother, his brothers' wives, a little niece or so to cling to his finger to steady her wandering, wobbling little fancy (located in as wobbling little legs) : were these fit tutors for a man to profit in witchery by ?

In this one startling onslaught by my marvelously cool little barbarian who travelled alone under escort of the air of a princess, the entire reverence of a lifetime became clownishness, outstripping forgiveness to him.

"Who are you," she cried, "that you would not speak to me all that long, long, horrid journey we travelled together, and alone? I would not bite you ; I am not a plague. You would not even take my check for me. In cities — men — gentlemen — don't act like that."

The lofty, disapproving, cold little voice ceased. The man within was still snoring. The man outside felt some castles tumble, — we call it feeling heart-sick, I believe.

They stood staring at each other.

He forbore to tell her who he was ; he overlooked the instinctive truth within him that the

A Gu'l

bites of women are as the balm of Gilead to men ; he did not stoop to boast he was from a city, the very greatest one in her brave, fine land, — but through his set forgiving lips (remember, she was very pretty) came the abashed mumble of manly words :

“ Miss,” he commenced, but it sounded shoppy, so he said, “ Madam,” and saw, even as he said it, her fair, wondrous skin and the sweet dawn of first life throughout her, so just one simple, straightforward, little line came from his shame and his wonder.

“ I was only trying to treat you as I should like my sister to be.”

They stood staring straight at each other all over again. All the fight (as we say in this country) had gone out of the girl, and she who was never at loss with a clever, happy opinion on man, saint, or devil, had no apt word ready for this solemn youth, until the old ball-room repartee came to her, and she said :

“ Have you a sister ? ” with quaint, appealing, almost irresistible coquetry.

He said, “ No,” with a great calm, almost a resignation, through which the hovering joke dared not penetrate, possibly.

Almost simultaneously her eyes again encountered the door of the dining-room opposite ; the almost visible clatter, the grotesque hangings, the

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gobbling men, and the great unwholesome morsels they were transferring from plate to self.

In an instant, the man was protector. His too grave young face was now totally unlighted.

"May I enter the dining-room with you?" he asked; "I should like to offer you my protection."

She gave a quick look up from the ground where her gaze had fallen:

"Did you intend to do that all along?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered simply.

Then they moved on toward the breakfast-room. She walked on beside him with lowered eyes. Both were very pale, very silent, very, very sick of heart at their recent combat, and the foolish fancy that life ended there, as well as their better knowledge of each other.

They were seated close together, because, by some happy surmise, Boston Jim thought them man and wife.

ON A STAGE

MR. CAMPBELL was staring straight ahead of him. He sat alongside Shorty on the stage. I do not know on what his eyes were really fastened, but, according to the Holy Scripture, all that even a prophet or a king could have seen was a road, some cactus land, and the dust which no rain had lain for three long-lived moons.

Aware of the silent presence of that girl near, he suddenly spoke in a very loud voice, and even more dogmatically than ever. Two reasons were involved in this: his national prejudice against the far-away chirp women seemed to be making for their mentality and independence; his desire to prove to his stricken companion that a gu'l could n't tie his tongue. He laid special emphasis on *his* in this, and despised the low-water marks on Shorty.

His first remark was about the sky.

He was not looking at the sky as he said it. None of the actual tragedy of the inevitable was as yet in his heavy utterance; but there are just such occasions, when there blows on idle ears the

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unheeded foreteller of a mighty storm. But it is a disintegration. This little gust — we know not of its course or might. No more by the sound of his horse's hoofs do we know it is Death who comes on his coal-black charger — and all praise to the God who made such things so.

"This is a drou't sky," Campbell said.

It fell on idle ears, I say ; as the couple whom Boston Jim took for man and wife sat on the back seat in tense, angry silence. Angry, if you please, at themselves, at chance, at creation, so Shorty alone was left to answer.

"Why is it a drou't sky?" he asked, after a little silence, in which he had said the self-same words over to see how they would sound when uttered. He was overwhelmed by the consciousness of the girl's wonderful and unexpected appearance. His voice sounded terrible to his ear after all ; like an old music-box gone ungovernable at last, such a one as grinds out only funeral notes on a holiday.

"Why is it a drou't sky?" asked Shorty.

"Because it is a drou't sky."

"Who told you o' 't?"

Indignation marked Mr. Campbell's utterance. It grew more husky :

"No one told me o' 't," he replied. He raised his whole remark one key. Telegraph poles, lean kine, and great-eyed calves now

On a Stage

appeared on his range of vision, but he made no apparent note of the change of panorama.

"Do I need to be told o' 't?" he went on. "Ain't a drou't a drou't wheresoever, — Texas, hell, or here?"

Red as have been painted the festivities enjoyed by this genus of ours, the Puncher proper, and black as has been painted the hue of his vocabulary, which must fall (so the fairy books teach) as toads, the white spot which enshrineth women is greater, we may infer, as bespoke the crimson face of Mr. Campbell the moment consciousness descended unto him, that hell and its thousand suburbs was no fitter subject for converse with ladies than mention of the saloon at Hope.

"I ask anybody's pardon," he said. And so all credit to the asking, — doggedly humble as it was.

"I ask anybody's pardon, I say, but when a man's seen one cattle famine, 'tain't boasting to say he seen them all. I ain't seen that darn fool blue sky s'rene as some frilled she-devil for ten years in Arizona athout a-knowing what it means."

The girl in the rear seat leaned forward. She had on light gloves, and rested her hands on the back of the seat behind these stalwart frontiersmen, and until an angel steps out of heaven and engages in some such trifling intimacy with you, you won't know how Campbell and Shorty felt.

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"What is a drou't?" she asked.

Campbell started heavily at her voice, recovering himself aggressively.

"It is cow trails of bleaching bones," he commenced, and suddenly burst out laughing — "busted," he would have said. Shorty caught up on the chorus, shaking violently with the force of his mirth.

The girl's fair face and grave eyes were a sort of civilized protest against the sound. She lost the cause altogether:

"Whose bones?" she asked.

Shorty clapped his knees and roared louder than ever. Campbell stopped laughing a second or so, long enough to say this sentence.

"Cow-bones, calf-bones, steer-bones," he sputtered.

Then went off again.

The girl kept her head well forward, so the man in the back seat could not see her eyes. They had grown dark of a sudden with tears. She did not understand the great crude faults of this bleak frontier land. She was worn out with travelling. She was young and a gu'l.

There was a miserably sympathetic desolation in Mr. Campbell's "cows'-bones" and "calves'-bones" to her. She did not know what a steer was. Thus, with no better explanation of it, this drying up of a great country became inexorably

On a Stage

associated with her entrance therein. She never got over the first sickening reality of it. There was no hospitality to her welcome from nature, man, or God.

Mr. Campbell was unaware of this. He thought he was some one. It is a common mistake.

"I have seed this same land of ours dry's it choked you to see it. Them mountains yellor like with a fever; the cattle dropping thr'out a herd in sixes." He gave another great laugh. It was very funny.

"The little chap at Weffold's ud probably call it having plenty of milk in Heaven that year. He is a great kid, that un. Bax had him down to the c'ral one day, while they was a-shooting some steers fur market. Suddenly he burst out crying, and Bax quiet'n'd him that way. The fatherhood, no doubt, makes the tricks easy; but Bax is a fool over that child."

"'T ain't neither," contradicted Shorty, huskily; "the child loves Bax likes he's God A'mighty."

"Spare the rod and spoil the child," snapped Campbell, readily. It was the only thing he could think of just then. May be he meant it. He was a Britisher and childless, so he believed the Good Book as yet.

The girl settled back in her seat. The tear had fallen, so she did not care.

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"Who is Bax?" she asked, almost without interest.

Mr. Campbell gained afresh in importance :

"Son to old Weffold," he said, while Shorty came in like a glad duet from which shyness was gone by its own high grade of inspiration :

"He's th' whites' man in Arizona — Bax — "

"Bax Weffold's all ri'," continued Mr. Campbell, speaking belligerently, through feeling he had been outdone.

"Bax *is* all ri'," said Shorty again, touching up his horses as he did so. They passed a pasture line just then. It came to the very road like a sleeping dog which would like to stretch across if it might. It ran off far as human eye could reach.

"It is old Carl's — he is Bax's father." Mr. Campbell went back to his solemn jokes. He prefaced them by the same loud laughter. "Old Carl Weffold is 's unlike Bax as two peas can be. He is a corker. There is common saying goes around periodical-like 'z whiskey among the mine men, that there's only one man besides the old Boy prospers all time in Arizony. It is Maj'r Carl hisself. And even this is disputed as proper by a supposition as is common in Hope and there'bouts, that he and the old Boy is one."

At this, without any preparation, the girl clapped

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her hands, as if she heard a *mot* in a theatre. During this performance, she chanced to catch the eyes of her new neighbor. She stared back hostilely a second. Then, to her intense anger, she began to turn crimson.

At this he dropped his eyes.

Mr. Campbell and Shorty (whose real and long-forgotten name was Jones, Mr. Jones, if you please, and it may have even been Jones Jones) did not see this, so continued their conversation innocently.

"There ain't a man in Hope can tell more of the Weffold household than Shorty here;" this was from Mr. Campbell, justly proud of his friend.

Shorty switched around in his seat ever so little. It was his only response to this compliment. The girl could now see one entire ear, and that only; but she knew that she was honorable audience to this narrative. The strange man aboard was ignored, forgotten. He was some mining fellow, no doubt, — a transient expert sent by some of those Eastern vultures who hovered from time to time over that big treasure-hole at Hope; and these foolish fellows were properly despised by the real population, — they who had full literally shouldered their rude huts and their empty larders to go to this fabulous find of Dick Garnet's when it had become bruited abroad the few

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years before—for the boom had just dropped out of T—— that year. For the great mine and its kindly owner were under the protection of this jealousy at last,—the certain vague gratitude and possession we all feel toward the oven which bakes our bread. Even now and then, through Shorty's story, he said, "G' up" to his horses breathlessly. The girl leaned back and listened. After a while his involved interruptions became part and parcel of the tale.

"Thirty 'd years ago I fust stepped my foot in Arizona. It war n't pr'meditated—the step. My brother'd skipped cross the line here fur sumthin'—fur—that's neither here nor there. That was the summer or so before, and then some one got wind of his whereabouts at home. Texas—was the place. I heard the hue and cry they wuz raising, and blood's thicker nor water, so I came West. I heard news of Joe in T——. The sheriff was a-hounding him down. There had been a fuss that year over outlaw immigration, so he war n't so much to blame as you think. I wanted pretty hard to find him, for the old woman's sake. She was jes' dead, and lef' Joe and me a few hundred dollars,—enough to get him out of the country and a-start again. I was more'n willin' to give Joe my share; but it was hard work tracin' him, and y' can imagine my feelings when I found out this way one night. It was late, and I dropped into

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the telegraph office to have a chat fur a bit, and when I was sitting there, there came a message from next station up the line. They 'd seen him pass, headin' fur Maj'r Weffold's. I was only a young fellar, and when I jumped on a horse soon after and faced a road I know'd nothin' of, with no head-start of a thorough-bred posse, I felt like I wanted to cry — the fight was n't beat'n in yet — often wonder if soldiers feel the same — mor' 'n likely, but never tell.

“After a mile or so I fell in with the very posse, — the fellows who was after Joe's life. We rode together. Oncet they started to laff, thinking of the joke they had on the — fool of a tenderfoot murderer — I did n't mean to tell what it was — self-defence and drinking. He thought to get over the border; it seems, did n' know old Weffold. He'd shelter no one, and less fur stealing a horse. He might's well faced the music in T——

“Gawd, how a fellar thinks of the time him and his brother's been little in a time like that.

“I have nothin' agin the cow-boys. After midnight, an hour or so, they found out his relation to me — I let it fall a-defendin' him, and they was bound'n to do their duty, but offered to give me a head-start on them by a shorter road.

“But I was afraid to lose my way, and we all came in sight of the ranch house together. It

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was day-break just. I've often thought of how we must 'a' looked. Old Maj'r—he wer'n't old Maj'r then—was on the porch a-waitin' of us. I rec'lect his throwing out his hand, his eyes like steel and his back like a poker.

“‘You might as well go back,’ he said, ‘the fellar got over the border after all.’ And then the old cuss had to put in: ‘‘T was on *Mrs. Weffold's* mare.’

“She came out of the house at that. She had on a slimsy white thing like women wears sometimes, and she carried a little fellow clost to her. Bax it was, as I knowed later. The kid was a-laughin’.

“‘Gentlemen,’ she said, ‘can you blame me? I am a mother.’

“I rec'lect like falling on my knees, blubbering like a fool 'n' a woman all to onct, and then one fellow holdin' his flask to me.

“An'—an'—Gawd!—

“After that she told me how it was. Joe had ridden up the prev'us evening, and the Maj'r had d'vined who he was. And she saved Joe. Whenever I look at Bax, I r'member his mother. She run the Maj'r pretty much those days,—the only person as ever done it. Seems's they'd had a hard tussle, but she won. And for a stranger—a fellow not fit in ed'cation or appearance to latch

On a Stage

her shoestring even, 'on account of Bax.' They let me stay on after. I made myself useful, and any man'd been a dog fur her.

"Bax uster crawl over my shoulder, — a little, flax-headed, lovable son-of-a-gun. Then I fo't with the Maj'r. It came about unexpected one day, 'n' I left Weffold's. Last time I seen her — Never knowed but whole thing'd blo'n over, and I could sneak back fur a look sometimes at her. But when I did, she was dead.

"It was years later. Bax must a-been in his twenties then, when I wandered into the Talent Ranch one night. I was tired and hungry, and it was stormin' outside. I was working for the Copper Co. then. Them and the Talent fellows got a gredge agin each other, which is natural-like in a way; but they treated me all right that night, only the gredge was there. Then, in the mornin', twenty dollars was missing from one of them. I did not tumble at first. Then there was growlings and lookings around, and I knowed I was suspected. I tried to keep cool. 'T war n't so much the twenty dollars, as the gredge, I guess. Still none a 'em knowed anything o' me, and it was nat'ral-like. At last I went out to get my money, and a fellow fell on me with hot words. I felt for my six-shooter, and in a second he clapped out his. But before either fired, some-thin' happened, — a fellow jumped off a horse

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near. He made straight for my 'ponent, and struck the pistol out 'f his hand.

“ ‘Dan, don't be a fool,’ he said, — them was his words, and them only. I was too excited to see who it was; but soon 's he heard my story, a sort of queer flush came to his face. I liked him for it. 'T was such a feeling 's a good man kin give his fellows 's well 's hissen.

“ He just said, ‘Wait a minute.’ We followed him into the hall, and from room to room, while he rummaged for something. Presently he turned over each sep'rate blanket, an' dragged at an old ragged quilt, wher' the fellow'd lost his twenty'd been sleeping. Presently, during a shaking, it rolled out.

“ None of us 'd thought of rummaging before, and, in the embarrassment afterward, they luffed and called it the ‘Dutch’ in him.

“ Even then I never guessed. Only after we ud gone out into the open, and I had a good look inter the fellar's eyes. They was gray and deep as the clear mornings of winter, as if they was a storm in 'em too, an' his hair was heavy and sad like flax with the gold outer'n it.

“ I don't know how I gave myse'f away :

“ ‘Gawd,’ I cried, ‘Gawd —’

“ He held out his hand and smiled — never smiled much, but ek'lled two ord'nary ones when 't happened.

On a Stage

“‘No one could say ‘Gawd’ like you, ’thout ’was your own se’f, Shorty,’ — them or like words, he said.

“‘T war Bax, o’ course’n, if you had n’t guessed. It seems the old man was off’n somewheres, and Bax was a-running Weffold’s them days. We rode over to the Copper Co. together, and I broke with ’em then and there. Bax was used to long rides, and on the way I gleaned he was none too happy from his look and his way; and when I r’membered ’bout his mother, and how she’n him been sich insep’rable companions, why — tumbl’d like t’ what ’t was. When he’d been a little chap, sich as most men ud been proud to clap eyes on as own kid of their’n, it was common talk around ’at the Maj’r was jealous of his wife’s love for the young un — unnat’ral, as it may seem —

“Never touched him or talked to the little chap lovin’-like, as parents will.

“Bax offered me the job at once. A round-up was on, and they was short-handed too. That had taken him to Talent that day. Fellow so ’noc’lated with the Weffold’s was darn glad ’nough to go.

“Had n’t been there two days when heard all about state of affairs from the boys. Seem’s Bax’d been sent to college East, and got a fine sort of ed’cation — could tell that to look on him.”

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Shorty stopped his narrative breathlessly. It had become a physical necessity, but he did not see it.

"Cam'll," he said, "what do you think of Bax Weffold, Arizona bred, agin those darn-fool fashion-patterns of experts from East?"

The young fellow in the back seat fell back so the girl could not see him. He had no conception of the ideal pictured, but felt almost a criminal shame of his own white hands and trim clothes.

"Bax's all ri'," returned Mr. Campbell. That was all.

"When Bax was East, so the story goes, he met a gu'l. They allus set great stock on that. She was a mere little thing at school, and they fell in love with each other — only never knowed it. Don't know much of them things my sen — but Mees Bax allus said that. (Mees Bax as she is now.)

"Then for six or seven years never seen each other. When it come autumn the old Maj'r asked some folks from some Springs wher' he'd been down fur a month or so. An' Bax's girl was one on them. I r'member the night they come, and how Bax rode up while they was a-gettin' out the cerriage. He was always civil and hospit'ble-like to the Maj'r's guests — from sheer duty — a great one on duty — Bax.

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“As he cum inter the inner yard from the c’rals, his hat came off, fur he seen it was ladies, and as he fell offer’n his horse to ground I never seen a better puncher fur a city-bred girl to get stuck on. She was a tall, pretty, spick, young thing, ’bout twenty or thereabouts, most likely — and spirited as ’n untamed colt.

“But some way when her hand fust went into hissen, it all went out her sudden-like. She looked hard and sweet a minute full at him, and we all knowed athout the telling, Bax Weffold ud foun’ his wife.

“And they went on that way for ’while. Sometimes when we fellows on the hacienda was riding miles away, after some of our brand as ’d strayed away, we ’d see them two, and when Bax’s face lost that dark, quiet look like an old man in young image, I don’t know who was gladder, him or us. And when he furgot to eat three meals a day, athout seeming to feel it, there was the rollickinest crowd of punchers at Weffold’s as ever a ranch held for awhile. But he never minded no innocent josh — did n’t Bax.

“Then all of a sudden everything changed. The gu’l went home, and there was n’t even letters. We thought at first she give him the jilt, and if ever a woman was ’lowed to be hated in Arizona, that slim, slip of an airy thing was.

“Then some way, athout any actual foundation

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for it, we knowed it was the Maj'r hissen. He hated his own boy — might as well not beat around the bush, and when he saw how things 'd turned, he showed it in a thousand despic'ble ways, an' the gu'l had left Bax, rather'n be un-welcome. She was always a might too proud.

"Once, Bax, he said to me: 'Shorty, sep'rations are often give us to learn to know each other better, to think out the *differences*, as it were.' I don't know if he heard or read it, or how he come to blurt it out to me; but we all a-knowed he was a-thinking about the gu'l, and Bax was always kind to dumb things and sufferin' creatures, but I seen him do things those times as 'd tax a saint to think of; fur no man ud think 'em worth while, — like staying up all night with a sick horse, or travelling twenty miles to save some whimperin' dog, and keepin' some Mexican loafer's family in beef a whole winter or more because the woman had a new brat to nurse.

"They say two people can't go on so loving each other athout coming together some day, and I guess there 's some truth to it.

"One day the Maj'r got a letter — I tuk it to him mysel'. I seen him break the seal and read it. It was on the closed-in porch. Bax was a-lying on the couch in the corner. He did n't see nothing. His eyes was closed, and I see the

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dark look deeper 'n ever on them, and that cloud like night forever on his brow.

"I was a-fillin' the ollas while the Maj'r read. I seen it was a woman's handwritin', like Sal, my sister, writ, only finer and freer-like; and when the Maj'r finished that letter, he read it over, and then agin, and then he folded it up prim-like, after his way, each corner fittin'.

"And then he threw his head back and closed his eyes also, as if a thousand devils was a-s'r-roundin' him, and he never flinchin'.

"And then I left them two together. I never said a word to the boys, but I knowed some way it 'd decide Bax's future, for the old Boy had a look on his face of his wife—and Bax was to win or lose by the tussle.

"That night when I came home at milkin' time, Bax was standing by the gate with 's mustang alongside him. He was so still as I came near he might have been carv'n, and there was a look on his face quiet, yet glad-like, sam' 's religion.

"'Shorty,' he said, 'I've been waitin' to say good-bye to you, my friend'—them same words.

"I did n't know what to say to him, so I filled-up-like for some cause.

"'Shorty, you fool,' he said, 'I am going to be married at last. The Maj'r has come around.'

"I blazed up at that some way. It sounded

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tyrann'cal-like, and for him of all others to stand it. And he seen the way I felt.

“‘You’ve been blamin’ me, Shorty,’ he says, quiet-like, yet sure-voiced and gentle.

“‘Yes,’ says I, ‘yes, Bax, if you will.’”

“Then I saw he went bareheaded.

“‘I knowed it all along,’ said Bax; ‘but I did not blame you — only — there was my mother, you see, and she had died holding his hand and my hand, and asking that we have peace. I am his son, Shorty, remember that. And even before she was cold on that bed, we was a-glaring hate at each other.

“‘It was a miserable pretence afterward.’ (He left out the love part altogether, as if we understood it.)

“‘And to-day,’ he said, ‘*she* wrote —’

He looked quizzical-like down at me.

“‘And you’ve been blaming her, too, Shorty?’ he said.

“There was n’t nothin’ to say to him, as war n’t seen on my face.

“‘She had been to a ball that night, you see, and when she went home, she wrote to the Maj’r.’ And at that his head went down sudden-like on the top of his saddle, and he cried out like these words, ‘My true dear girl.’

“And then I reached out and took his hand — friends understand sich things athout long

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explanations. Not saying was the same 's if he 'd said to me for his defence, as it were, ' I could n't *crucify* her, Shorty,' or for hers: 'The while she was proud, her heart was breaking.'

"So Bax rode off in the night, and I came 's near blubbering at Weffold that evening as I 'd ever done since the day he was little Bax, a-laugh-in' tender-like in his mother's arms.

"There was a barbecue in the whole country the night Bax brought home his wife, and under the excitement and compliment of it the old Maj'r was Chesterfield himself, as Boston Jim calls it.

"And he behaved all right for a while, but so condescending-like to their contentment over being together as made my blood bile fur 'em, and tuk all away from his giving in.

"Then he changed like a flash of a suddent. It was jest four years ago,—big drou't time,—no one ever knowed what caused the Maj'r's manner, and some laid it to the drou't; but I seen the injustice of it, as the poor girl was ailing-like. One's heart ached for her, but she never said no word of complaint, and Bax, he suffered as well, I guess, over the Maj'r's infernal meanness at jes' this time. Then one day the heat came to climax-like itself. Things wilted-like in the sun, and great herds of crazy cattle swept up from the

In the Country God Forgot

surrounding country to the smell of water in the tanks and troughs. But we all knew our orders, — no cattle was to be let in the big gates but our own; so we men went back so's not to see it. It was a sickenin' sight. Some dropped outside of Weffold's, and some poor things tried to jump the fence, and got torn and hurt on the wires.

"Old Maj'r, he walked out once and smiled, looking it all over:

"'Ef the dogs want to pay for their meat being saved, we'll save it for them,' he said; 'ten cents a night for pasture, and proper rates for pumping through a pipe line.'

"Sal told me this story, — she is my sister, who married Joe Dillon — know, Joe, Cam'll?"

Mr. Campbell enjoyed this. He laughed afar off, somewhere in his heavy shoes.

"Have good occasion to remember Joe Dillon — liked to thrash him into a jelly one night at Howell's on a party, for stealing my horse to take Bet Johnson home. Left me rather too much tat-a-ta with that spare-ribbed dorta 'f Foxy McLennan's who's been trying to marry every Copper puncher for this ten years or more —"

Shorty burst out laughing. Reaction over his late narration aided this. He fairly rolled and ha-haed, then he gathered himself together.

"I must tell that to Sal," he said. "Lord, how

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she 'll josh Joe about it." Then he continued Bax's little tragedy.

"Sal, she was washing that day at Weffold's." He looked shamefaced, then went on, "Us fellows had to let her do it; Joe war n't working to speak of, — sprained his knee that summer, — and Sal is that headstrong.

"She describes it pretty c'rect. When the cows was making the bigges' rumpus, she said, young Mees Bax gave a cry, and jumped up from the chair. She was a sick, poor thing, and not used to frontier life like, and she never could endure sufferin'. Her hair was down, and she'd been crying, and in that way she rushed to the door. Bax stood jus' outside with his father. She run out, and he went to her; but before any one knowed what was to happen, she'd dropped her baby airs and looked, Sal said, for all the world like a queen in some fancy story. Meanwhile, her eyes blazed so, Sal said, the Maj'r stepped back as if struck.

"'Bax,' she cried, 'throw those gates open!' and, as he stood still for a second, she cried:

"'For me, my husband!'

"And Bax went."

COALS TO NEWCASTLE

“**T**HERE was only one outcome to it all. Sal said the girl re'lized it right at once, she thought, for she waited for him to come back to her after the cattle 'd rushed in. Her face was white, and she threw her arms around him.

“‘Are you *sorry*, Bax?’ she asked.

“Sal said they was a pretty sight. He had one o’ them tender smiles on his face, set-like and queer and dreamy, and then he stooped down and kissed her.

“‘No,’ he said; ‘no, little woman; I have been very thirsty myself.’

“I think the Maj’r’s hate got fixed at that moment.

“‘You can go,’ he said to Bax; ‘and for good — both of you, and you can take your mother’s share, if you want.’

“Bax turned sudden-like, as if he ’d been shot, and had n’t minded, but that probbing for the bullet hurt.

“‘We ’ll leave my mother’s name out of this,’ he said.

Coals to Newcastle

"And then they went in and off that evening to San Francisco. Bax wrote—she could not bear to see her people, and then two weeks later a kid was born. They called him Johann Carl Felix Weffold." He gave this almost apologetically, as if he longed to say, in supplement to it, "Mees Bax was not quite herself at the time."

"The Johann Carl was fer the Maj'r, and the Felix fer sich-like on hern side, I guess."

Here the girl on the back seat laughed a little. She only knew why.

"When the *Express* printed it in full, there was a sort of general cel'bration in this part of the ter'tory. If it'd been a cheer, Bax'd heard it in San Francisco. Bill Jennin's got drunk at once, same as 't been his own, and at the round-up next day, a hundred calves were branded for the little stranger, — his daddy was so well thought on.

"Then Dick Garnet struck his mine, and no one had time to think of Bax Weffold,—the new people was interested in each other and gettin' settled down—old Carl coined money, and when the road opened a station at Short's, he give me the chance of this position — stage and all. Sometimes I think it was a-meant towards Bax, knowin' how fond I'd always a-been of him.

"But there was lots of travel, and it kept me

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held, until last year I heard Bax 'd broken down and was sick. I got off for a bit, and went to 'Frisco. I've never been a father, and I never knowed how it was to feel like one.

"G' up — g' up —

"But I think I knowed kind o' how it might be when I went inter the room where Bax was. He was the wastedest fellar I ever seen. He'd been sick; she'd been sick; and then work between, and the fogs and the low wages, and then his breaking down under it all — and she was a-sewing for them. And the little fellar knowed enough to smile and to kiss me when Bax said, 'It is Shorty, Don,' for that was the best good his big name done him.

"Then she come in, and I seen the same girl, only with changes on her, for all she tried to be brave and spirky-like —

"'Well, this ain't so big as the Ranch, is it, Shorty? — but I don't know but that it has its advantages fur us. At any rate we can't get lost — can we?' and she gave Bax a regular old chiricahua¹ look.

"And she kep' this up for a while, until once, when Bax was talking, I seen she'd turned her back from him, and I knowed there was tears in her eyes, and as Bax talked I knowed his heart was a sickening after his own land, and his dumb

¹ A mountain range.

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things, and his place among us once agin, if only to die in it.

“And the money I gin him that night was his own, — every cent should have had Weffold marked on it; and I went back to Hope next week more ’n determined to face the Maj’r down in his devilishness toward his own flesh and blood, but before I got further ’n the intention, it was taken outer’n my hands into better ones. Dick Garnet, who found the mine, and his family were making their yearly visit then, and went out my fust trip with me, and we was riding sober along like this through this very country when, suddenly, afore I knowed it, I found mysel’ telling Bax’s story to all of them.

“And the lady, she burst out crying, and she said to him, ‘Dick, if you don’t do something for those poor, unhappy creatures, I’ll leave you sure.’”

At this, and for the first time during the narration, the young man (suspected of being a college expert) laughed suddenly himself. It was the full, still boyish merriment of one not easily moved to gladness, and caused the girl next to him to jump suddenly; at which he became very conscious of his own strangeness, and glared back at her quite as stonily as ever she could wish.

“Two weeks after then, Billy Simpkins, who runs the Post Office at Hope, told me suthin’,—

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a letter had gone out to Bax Weffold in the Maj'r's writing, — and then they all come down, and Gawd's patching from day to day of their rents and their humors since then."

The old fellow switched full around again. His story was still unfinished, and his heart was sore.

Mr. Campbell now took up the conversation, prefacing this procedure by a greater fixity of gaze :

"I, fur one, mistrust Bax's wisdom in having come —"

Shorty could stand no more of it :

"Shut up," he snapped.

They rode on a while in silence.

A cow and a gay little calf ran along across their path. Shorty's false shame had all returned, but he stammered into some words again :

"'T ain't in any creature's being to cruc'fy their young," he mumbled.

And all knew they were Bax's own defeat-stamped words.

Presently a turn in the road brought some smoke, toward which they had been heading, much nearer, and its source in view. A crowd of unpainted wooden, and red adobe huts semi-circled this sugar-plum like flies. A throbbing crept into the air, and, far up the side of a hill, wooden buildings and flumes were apparent.

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"It's the mine," Shorty announced, with the monotonous pleasure his profession called forth.

"There's one thing certain," said Mr. Campbell; "there's trouble brewing in these parts somewhere."

"If you want to find it—yes," the driver returned with a certain dignity that made his evasion serious.

"D'you mean to deny old Weffold and Dick Garnet fo't?" asked Campbell.

"I don't know nothing of 'em," Shorty returned.

Campbell burst into jeering laughter:

"You said as much jus' now your own sen," he said.

"Dick Garnet brought Bax home, ind'rectly—that is what I said, an' you know it."

"And you don't want to say sence then, Mr. Hity Tity, that Dick Garnet's come in on Bax Wefford's gredge with the old Maj'r?"

Shorty sniffed.

"Guess Dick Garnet's rich enough to take care of his sen," he announced.

"There'll be trouble brewing," Mr. Campbell allowed himself to remark in conclusion, just as if he had not said it before, and with all the enjoyment in his voice of a man who loves trouble and likes to see it prosper indefinitely. They were nearing the town gradually, and on

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one side, just now, six or seven little oblong picket fences surrounded as many mounds on the waste of barren plain.

"Cem'tery," announced Shorty, nodding toward it with his whip.

The girl shuddered, as young people will.

But Shorty had his pride, and he longed to display it. His chivalric regard for female loveliness, though, made him turn toward the strange man as he said this :

"Only one nat'ral death among 'em, and that was a woman's as was sick when she come along."

"It is a very creditable record," returned the young man. Shorty caught the twinkle.

"Ever met the Garnets?" he asked, turning around more fully.

"Once," returned the stranger.

"Dick?" asked Shorty.

"All of them," was the answer this time.

Riches have a fascination for us — rich people — good or bad.

The young man was looking straight ahead of him. His eyes were fixed on the Garnet mine. He heard an eager voice beside him all at once. It made his heart throb more and more quickly, for it was accelerated a trifle, as it was.

"And *are* the Garnets such a very wonderful people as one hears?"

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"What does one hear?" he asked, looking at her. "It all depends!"

"That they are so fond of each other, and so aristocratically *funny*," she returned. And then he shook his head, as if it were beyond him.

"That is only a point of view, is it not?" he answered.

But she was not to be put off so easily.

"It is no secret about the Garnets; but may be you don't know what people say of them? It was all in the papers once, when he discovered Hope."

"Possibly I did n't read it," her companion said. She looked at him out of the corner of her eyes, as if settling his social standing. Then she asked abruptly:

"Where are you from?"

He smiled and promptly answered "New York," thinking he had the advantage on this occasion; but she only puckered her brows scornfully and replied:

"There, I knew before you said it. Every one in New York is engrossed simply in his own affairs."

He went under at this stab, but came up when it was over, encouraged by something he knew.

"But all over the rest of the United States people have read of the Garnets, time and again. It is in Sunday morning magazines. How the

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Garnets were supposed to be very rich and lived in New York, and were greatly envied by every one. There were three brothers of them, and one younger son by another wife. That is the noblest part of it, — her having loved them *even almost better* than her own, and teaching that love amongst them. For one time Dick, who was the very oldest, committed some *expensive* crime —”

At this the young man did not restrain his laughter. It came out almost wildly, and in this God-forsaken country was one note of thanksgiving in his laugh.

Then, as he offered no explanation for it, she went on :

“And then there was some terrible trouble, and just when it was all about to be made public, Claude Garnet, that was the step-brother, you know, gave all his fortune to them, — he and his mother, — so that hushed it up.”

The mine throbbed, and the man listened.

“I think it was the noblest thing !” exclaimed the girl.

The young man still said nothing.

“And then Dick Garnet left his home and came out here, and — you know the rest of it. How the good step-brother went to work in an office and supported Dick’s deserted family —”

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She looked dreamily before her.

"Every girl in our seminary wanted to marry Claude Garnet when we read that," she announced slowly.

"Did you?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered quite as gravely.

And now they rode on toward the Garnet mine.

When the stage stopped in town, the girl got off with the others.

"May I see you home?" the man of the morning asked her. He stood near. He looked as if he would like to, and she thought it a great conquest, girl-like, but no-thanked him and walked away.

And as Shorty went toward the freight wagon about her trunk, he found himself pursued by this very maiden, and suddenly in her presence he felt at home.

For a great humility had replaced the youthful self-confidence on her face. In the country God had forgotten, she had heard the best sermon of her life.

"I am going to Weffold's," she said to this large-hearted rough diamond on this occasion. "I want you to forgive my not having said so sooner—to Bax Weffold's. I am his sister-in-law."

The young man, left alone, hardly knew which way to turn, so he turned to Mr. Campbell, who

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stood staring at something man could not attempt to place.

The stranger sought to pierce his manner :

"I trust your doubts on the general condition of the country will not be realized," he commenced haltingly.

Mr. Campbell stared at him.

"Not to doubt nothin' is to be blind," he said. "There's been two times to my own knowledge lately the water power's been shet off from the mine fur no reason whatsoever. They have tried to bore for water themsen and failed. Old Carl Weffold virtelly controls the country, 'pointed, as I afore-mentioned, by the Old Boy hissen."

He smiled appreciatingly at this, and the young stranger's face changed also. It gained in responsibility.

"The mine 'as changed sup'rintendents twice athin a year — trouble is a-brewing somewhere," announced Mr. Campbell, for the third time. "Last fellar called old Weffold down on the street in town, an' the men backed him, and there was near a riot. And when Dick Garnet came 't war plain to see he was jarred by it till he said one day, in his jolly way, as if he seen a way out of it (it was to Miss Garnet, his wife — she seems a great prop to him, as it's fit in a wife — women are useless enough as it is):

"By Jove, there is Claude! He'll come for

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me.' Hern all this missen, and then he laughed hearty way of his he has'n and said, 'A truce to my troubled waters, while there is oil like Claude.'"

It is funny, O you rich of the earth, you children of Fortune, how we can remember and cherish your every word!

"So a Garnet is coming to Garnet," remarked Mr. Campbell, almost religiously, and he looked straight before him at Heaven knows what again.

Then he said to his companion:

"Ever seed Dick Garnet?"

"Yes," said the man.

"Him an' his wife an' his chil'ren?"

"Yes."

"May be you've seen the new sup'rintendent?"

The young fellow hesitated a moment; then he raised his head simply. He turned toward the mine and looked at it.

He felt the great vain mastery of possession. No man (were truth unveiled) had a better right to gaze so on it—Dick Garnet notwithstanding. Then a thought seemed to pass over him slowly. He stood back and seemed to grow shorter. A faint flush of shame stained his face, and his gaze fell short of a sudden; yet, by some quirk of our language, we are to call this his fairer manhood.

"I am Claude Garnet," he said.

WHOM GOD HATH JOINED

MEES BAX'S name was Laurel. It had been Laurel Laurence once, but for that an author is not to blame, so we must pass it over.

She was the mother of Johann Carl with the supplementary Felix breathed in an undertone.

But Johann Carl Felix Weffold did not know himself yet by this cognomen. He was simply Don. Sometimes, with the liberality of childhood in disposing of its immortal soul, he would say on awakening of mornings :

"A day I am not Don! Am a little boy 'at use a-know Shorty afore him getted bal'."

"No," Mees Bax would say firmly ; "that little boy had straight hair."

Johann Carl Felix would get very angry at this :

"No, him had cals," he persisted, "only him neber taked a bath."

He knew this clinched the matter indisputably ; for she was too proud of his having arrived at such an irrefutable conclusion to attempt to defend that straight-haired little bouncer (Bax

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proper) who had, in the long ago, gone to sleep so often after pulling Shorty's departed hair.

She was sitting now on the closed-in porch, feasting her eyes on her younger sister, who had arrived just one-half hour before. (Shorty was dining inside, and chatting with Sal, who was washing dishes. Sal worked there rather steadily those days.) She never took her eyes off Robbie, except once, when Johann Carl Felix called out in shrill, inconsolable dismay. Then she rushed to the door, and looked out at him. He had great shaded eyes and flax glintery hair, and it was worth the rush to see him.

"Mommie," he cried, "come q'ick and help me. The elfer is a-goin' to run away."

The elephant was a cotton-batting beast of irregular proportions, who indulged in this false alarm periodically. He was sitting placidly on the ground and facing the gate to the pasture.

Mees Bax seemed to see nothing ridiculous in it, but went out and shut the gate, talking sympathetically as she did so. On her backward tramp, she paused just long enough to fling the little lad high enough to kiss him, and then came back to her seat. She looked taller, more whimsical than ever, and the effect was not lost on the city girl. It is a mistake to think sisters use gloves in handling each other's feelings. After two years' separation, these two told only of their

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gladness in long, tender looks. There were too many things which belonged to bed-time confidences alone. They had been reared singularly. Thus the same sharp dealing with surface impressions and a certain consequent, half-unkind candor became a mere family trait.

Rel was Bax's name for her. After sitting down she detected Robbie's gaze with that very critical summarizing to it, so her lips and eyes took on a certain droll resignation.

"Miss Roberta Laurence, Dealer in Unvarnished Truths, what have you to say now?"

Robbie looked responsible.

"Dark, sallow women should never wear black," she answered quite soberly. "You can't stand it. There should be some relief to the deadness. You look as if you had lost your last friend."

"Not quite," said Mrs. Bax. Then she added, with a certain feminine little pathos, "I have a lavender ribbon in my room."

Robbie expressed proper horror now.

"Don't!" she cried. "You'd look awful. Don't you know any better? The black is bad enough, but the lavender would be hideous with your complexion."

Suddenly she seemed to think of something:

"Does n't Bax know?" she asked.

"There is a time," was Mrs. Bax's sole an-

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swer, "when a man's tie and a woman's dress are only rudimental supports of marriage."

Silence ensued. It seemed like a mist in which each was lost, and through which one at least could not see clearly. This was Robbie, and when her voice alone seemed to struggle through at last, it had an odd little note for assistance in it.

"I don't know why you live in such a God-forsaken country."

"Every one calls it that," Mees Bax broke in. "We fall in the habit of talking of God far more familiarly than if He were present. I never realized how that could be till I got here. Still it is n't right."

"You need not make any irrelevant digressions," was Robbie's return to this. "I simply can't stand it. Life began to change the very moment I crossed the border. It was barely dawn, and suddenly I felt my heart ache,—almost as if I saw it. It was so real! It seemed as if I were miles away from civilization, and under no protection."

"You have us," said Mrs. Bax, proudly; she was thinking of Bax.

"You!" the girl cried as if tortured. "I find you the most absolutely acclimatized thing in the whole country. It is a toss-up between you and the hills. They are like you, and your black,

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and your not wanting to change it. Just fallen out of the habit of looking green."

The girl sprang up and went to the door in tense, angry rebellion. She looked out.

It faced the northern sweep of the country, just such ground as she had traversed several hours before, mile after mile of scorched, drying stubble. The barnyard, the half-filled corrals, the great guarded tanks, and the motionless wind-mills mixed hopelessly.

Mrs. Bax, on looking, suddenly covered her eyes with her hands. She did not care to re-live it. When she looked forth again, it was to meet two great tearful eyes, and to feel the warm clasp of soft city hands around her neck, and to hear the voice not given to many such weaknesses, half-moaning:

"Can't you see I love you?"

"Yes, oh, yes," answered Mrs. Bax, and kissed her.

Then they fell apart again.

"You see," the older woman remarked, as they sat at proper angles now, "Bax and I have always loved you since you were a little, little girl, and thought you had a right in the parlor when he really came a-calling on me. It was awfully hard telling you otherwise without hurting your feelings, and I don't know what we'd ever have done if Bax and I had n't paid you of evenings to

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go to sleep early on the couch, — what a mercenary little thing you 've been! — still that was a subterfuge, making you think little silly school-girls needed beauty sleep. But I never minded leaving you for him, until one time; then I felt sorry for it. It was when Don was born. I remember Bax had imagined I was going to die. May be all men do. And so when it was all over and he sat there holding my hands, I said, 'Bax, there is a thought in my head.'

"And he said, 'I know, darling.' And I said, 'I want to tell it to you.' And he answered:

"'Rel, I was the bigger brute, so let me make the penance.' I thought it was noble of him!"

"Perfectly lovely," Robbie broke in. She had held up her hands comically. "You and Bax are in a constant conversational furor like Mr. Hope. I never knew such clever dialoguists. When you are not repeating, word for word, what Bax said, he is illustrating all sorts of womanly virtues by Rel."

She imitated their several manners truthfully, and Mrs. Bax became a trifle affronted.

"Well, I won't bore you any more," she announced, setting her lips a little.

"Oh, yes, you will," answered the girl. "I want to hear about Bax's being noble. Bax's

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nobility is like the Eiffel Tower. It can't be reported too high."

Mrs. Bax was silent, whereupon the subject was seized and handled for her with clever, girlish impertinence.

"Well, I'll tell it for you:

"Tableau — A happy room, with special emphasis on the happy, and two foolish people holding each other's hands, and angels singing "Love's Old Sweet Song," with a baby's cry in the chorus. Then Bax said: 'We have *two* children, only we never knew it. Robbie is our eldest, dear!' — I can't put proper capitals in when I am talking."

Mrs. Bax rose above the banter:

"We wrote you that night," she said, "at least Bax did, and I kissed it afterward."

"You were foolish to have wasted the time," said the girl. "You should have known me better. I did not need a mother's love then, nor a home to make me an old-fashioned Phyllis, — I have always been too up-to-date. That was what made me refuse your offer. I love the world."

"Yes, I know now," returned Mrs. Bax, simply. "Then Bax and I were hurt, I may as well tell you, and we did not have much money; but he wanted to go East for you, and bring you back to our home, Robbie. We were in San

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Francisco then ; but almost on top of this determination came a letter from your chum's mother, saying how she was very wealthy, and had only the one daughter to live for, and she asked if you might visit them indefinitely, telling, in a kind, straightforward way, of the advantages it would be to you, — associating with cultivated people and living in such a lovely home. And all Bax and I had in contrast, dear, was a bare room and our love in it. I know we were ashamed that evening, imagining how you would have *looked* had you come, so we let you stay. Only we were so proud, Rob dearie, when you wrote you had gone as her secretary. It was plucky, Bax thought."

"Leave off the p," Robbie answered. "I am tired of it. They said that there. It was sheer luck all through. Other girls have to work lots harder in an office or a shop, — girls every bit as good as I am. I hate points of view. There is only one way to look at it, — it was inevitable such a little cad would feather her own nest softly."

Mrs. Bax commenced to laugh at that. Robbie usually struck her as very funny, except when she made her mad.

"The only thing I can't get over is your coming now," she said. "'Pon my word, I'll never be too sorry Bax was n't here to enjoy my aston-

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ishment. It was the surprise, Robbie! It — was — the only divine thing you ever did.”

Robbie’s heart contracted, at least it felt that way. She did not like to say what Mrs. Bax could not now mention: “It was because of Chicky’s death I came.” Chicky had been a transient roomer, very transient, in the world, and had passed out just one month before this. So, for want of better words, Robbie asked:

“Did you know me when I rode up the road on the stage?”

“So help me,” said Mrs. Bax, “yes.”

There was no need for the emphasis, and her voice was not appropriate to it; but it bore the simple straightforward stamp of her acclimation, as Robbie called it, to both people and things.

“And what was your first thought?” asked Robbie; “tell me that.”

“I wished Bax were near, so he could say, ‘I told you so,’ to me. I deserved it, Robbie. He always said there was good in you.”

Robbie burst out laughing.

“Go on,” she said, “do.”

Mrs. Bax smiled.

“People in Arizona don’t flatter, you see. You won’t like us. I saw it in your face as you drove up. You need a glamor or so, my love. But when you stepped off the stage, I was bound not to go out. I was anxious to see the meeting

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between you and Don. You said, 'Who am I, darling?' and he knew you at once, did n't he?"

"Whatever idiosyncrasies you and Bax claim," remarked Miss Laurence, "Don's all ri'." She said it with a thick British accent. "I learned that on the stage."

"Well, I don't like to make a phenomenon of him, for then he might die," returned his mother. "Don is a bright child." She laughed here, as if defying Robbie, "Only remembering you was merely calling on a familiar name. That was Bax and I in him. He could never have helped knowing you, Robbie. You are the only girl he's ever heard about."

She rose and held out her hand to the girl. Robbie followed, almost solemnly; but when they got to the broad screen door, Mrs. Bax just flung it wide, and pointed outside somewhere, in a sweeping, lingering sort of way.

"We buried our little lad out there. I don't want you to feel badly for me; but I'll never, never forget your having come. It is not only having good in you, but putting it to account, my dear."

The girl's eyes had grown dark again of a sudden, as they had on the stage. She shivered, and edged nearer.

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"It is all so sad," she cried.

"No," said Mrs. Bax, simply. She had argued it out often before. "No, not sad, my dear. They say God suits the back to the burden. So I have often thought when He went out of the State, He took Hope with him. It is on the same plan, — gray may become black, but never white again.

"Bax and I never thought we could love better than we did Don, but we did not know. This was so very different, — such a poor sad little scrap of humanity. Our life was not very long together. On the day he died, I can remember a Mexican woman's hanging over me when I lay half asleep, and saying, in such a sad little fashion, 'It is so *sorry* to have a baby dead,' and I mumbled, 'No, so happy!' and they thought I was delirious. Only Bax knew."

She went in so suddenly it lent loneliness to her reason.

"Now you are here, Rob, we can be awfully happy together, and you mustn't be lonely, darling; only there's not much company. Now the men have been away all morning, and were to have coffee and lunch in the fields, and Bax had to go with them. There was something about the boundaries only he knows. But if I wait any longer, he will never forgive me."

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She stepped across the narrow hallway, toward the sound of Sal's steady stream of conversation and Shorty's appreciative chuckle every once in a while.

"Shorty," she said, "thet sweet," as he'd be apt to call it, "there's not a man around to send for my husband, and I want him home."

In nonsensical little moments such as these she gained a great pride of a sudden, and would not call Bax, Bax to the men.

Shorty rose, flustrated, from where he had been shovelling Mexican beans into his mouth on nice warm tortillas.

"Yer only have to say the word, Mis' Wef-fold," he answered. By almost mechanical intuition he called her Mis' Weffold instead of Mees Bax these times.

She laughed and said, "Don't hurry, you're awfully kind to go, Shorty."

Then a moment later he heard her outside. She had on her "frilly" voice, to quote Mr. Campbell, and there was a good deal of mischief in it.

"I think, after all," it was saying,—that voice,— "I'll let him come at dusk, Robbie. Go tell Shorty to leave things as they are. And you stand by the gate just so, girly, as if you'd stepped off the stage. We don't look unlike each other, and I want to see if—if he's known

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I was dark and sallow and all the rest of it this long.”

Sal went on with her cooking, after a back toss at it.

“They ’re a great team, them two,” she said.

MAID AND MAN

THE tragedy of Robbie's first impressions did not affect her permanently. She was too young, and the change was too immense. It was very vital to her former mode of life, also.

At first she could not classify her thoughts. Then existence became divided into two great epochs,—the time before and after Chicky's death.

Twenty-two years and these coming days: first one, then two, barely four (I might tell you) before we have to do with her again; yet one period seemed as long as the other. For she was not separated from her past by distance only; more by the mere fact that it was to be past to her,—a sort of background effect forever. And she had been very sincere in her impulse toward Bax and his family, and their great need of her just then.

In this new phase of life, she confessed to the shallowness of her other views on people and things. And when the chastisement grew too severe, she

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would turn over on her great, cool pillow in her little attic room, in Rel's queer adobe, and say, in that little restless, moaning way which sleep would not seem to soothe very kindly, simply, "I did not know before."

She did not own any more, because everything was a wonderful and alarming chaos, out of which that hesitating little sentence was all she could deduce. But there were a great many memories of her past life, those days. They came like ghosts in the dim room which this wonderful night time of Arizona lit magnificently. Then the parties, the people, the rich clothes, the march of elaborate events in her past, dwarfed considerably.

And what better form can memory take than of ghosts? — something which has been real, and well-loved, or hated, once, and now but shadowy, tantalizing things we fear to touch, and thus can never meet face to face, environed by the same humanity and circumstances again.

There were periods, too, toward which the thoughts of this person or that one, the past and the present, turned almost invariably. Problems which she worked out only at night, — thoughts of Mrs. Bax, their girlhood, the things she herself had done and had not done; a thousand useless regrets and remorse, — all still in a hopeless and unsatisfactory whirl when sleep came at last to her.

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But the young cannot sleep to no purpose. And as if the health of body brought health of mind, she would awaken to spring from her soft, low, little bed, and watch the dawn of the new day in this strange, sand-driven land, with its incomparably beautiful heaven.

There would come to her the constant chatter kept up by the snowy ducks, the sad, far-off low of some lonely cow for its young, the cheery josh called from hand to hand amongst the many punchers, sometimes the words of a ballad, sung many times in their home parlor by Mrs. Bax, or the whirr of an ax swung by the stern old Maj'r, as he worked mechanically.

This was his one recreation. "It des old bones no good to settle," he would say, when rallied on it. The South came out in that voice, uncorrupted by forty years of frontiersman lingo, — soft, clinging, at almost startling variance with eyes, mouth, and manner, — his native tongue.

All these sounds would rise, I say, and yet standing against the frame of her window those dawns, or kneeling wonderingly in her flimsy night-robcs still, nothing save a passionate sense of pity would come, as yet unnecessary and unlocated.

In time she acknowledged what provoked it. Nothing which was near, I say. Even the throbbing little echoes which answered those love-words

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in Mrs. Bax's voice, echoes from the heart, if you will, with its store-house of harmony and discord, courtship, wedlock, motherhood, child-giving — let us not forget.

This would be Bax afar off with his little son on one horse, sitting close, as of one body. Sometimes it was a mere silhouette against the sky or mountains, — a moving speck on the vast panorama. Nearer again, at times you could see the man's face, dark and yet fair, strong and yet tender, with its physical and spiritual battles at end for the moment; and looking up, as at a sacred image, the adoring, beautiful eyes of his child.

"They are very companionable," Mrs. Bax would say proudly.

"What do they say to each other? I never realized children talked sense before."

Mrs. Bax would look superior. She always did on such occasions. Don and Bax were as open books to her, and she wanted them to be so to each other, more and more familiar as time went by. She was never jealous. Often on these occasions she could imagine what the child said to the father, and how that rare smile of the man's would come and linger, as if it were trembling, or his arms tighten a bit around the little form.

Maid and Man

"Somp day 'll ganpa gib all a me poppie, if me am a good boy?"

"Yes, Don, only that is a secret between mommie and us two."

"When ganpa gib a me poppie, will him throw?"

"No; why, mannikin?"

"Him throw a c'gar box yesaday. Elefer look ferry funny. Me teached a elefer not to throw."

Bax looked over his head a second.

"When all a mine," continued the little fellow, stumbling in his generous haste into irregular little rises and tender cadences, "me gib all a oo."

And they 'd put a spur at that to the gay little mustang, and ride like mad, keeping time with their laughter.

While almost identically, with a naïve, tender little intuition, Mrs. Bax would emerge from the hallway or cupboard, or wherever she had chanced to flee to gird herself for an attack on that ever constant thorn in her side.

This sat in an easy chair and owned changeless relentless eyes under white shaggy eyebrows. When he felt her beside him, he gained the perfect quiet of listening attention without looking up.

"May I read to you?"

"No, madam, thank you." The thank scalded.

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That was all.

It was of matutinal courage this, conceived of nobler things than her own heart knew literally of as a motive.

And a failure,—oh, sad part!—for the day will come when we stop our acts and call them intentions, which cease also after a while.

Under the wear and tear of these emotions, the ranch as a unit was singularly prosperous, Robbie thought. She caught on to the minutest details whimsically, with a quaint little belief in her own interest in them. The story she had heard on the stage coming in was stripped now to almost a hand-to-hand encounter between the natures of the father and son. She saw the bitter, continual, relentless hate Carl Weffold bore in look and manner. It seemed like fire of the blood to her, which the milk of human kindness was totally unable to quench. In contrast were Bax's lordly or martyred submissions. In such moments the figurative bending of his back seemed almost literally due to the clinging arms of that little chap whose right it was to own Weffold some day,—just as his sharp speeches seemed ever just checked, but in a dreamy sort of fashion, as if it were a woman's hand which went over his mouth.

After looking around a bit for lodgings, Claude Garnet discriminately chose Mrs. Fitzsimmons'

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—“Mrs. Fitzsimmons,” if I may quote to the letter. He did not know much about her.

“Can you point me out some decent lodgings?” he had said to Mr. Campbell, that first afternoon, not knowing any one but Mr. Campbell, and having run across this gentleman on his way from the mine. (The stalwart miner wore a new hat, Mr. Garnet observed, and stood well in the middle of the road, as if he’d gotten there in some innocent fashion, and then received an electric shock, from which he had not recovered.)

“I kin,” this gentleman responded agreeably.

“You see,” young Garnet went on, “it is uncomfortable knowing no one.”

Mr. Campbell looked blanker than ever:

“There’s the sup’rintendent’s house?” he suggested innocently.

“I am a single man,” the young fellow replied. “I can’t quite see the justice of my occupying the best house in town alone, while our book-keeper crowds his entire family into that cold, miserable little frame-building which barely accommodates two persons. He was home with one of the little girls, who is very delicate, they tell me, so I had a good chance to see how matters were.”

He told it very simply. He had come with the simple hope of letting the men know that he was there to befriend them; that it was not a question of capital and labor, but man and man.

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Yet with no medium but this stolid-faced Briton, he realized what a risk his utterances ran. How, with no other interpreter than himself for his acts, they seemed shallow, false, egotistical, — a flimsy play toward unearned popularity.

But Mr. Campbell's next remark showed no foundations for his misgivings.

"Ruther partial to gu'ls any way, I guess," he remarked, "from fourteen upwards?"

After this sly innuendo, he burst into a thunderous guffaw. There war n't so much josh in this new Garnet, he might have told you, but then a Garnet is a Garnet, the world around.

Claude tried to smile, but it was rather sickly. He did not envy the reputation, and wondered if his actions on the stage had been productive of it. It was not comforting, that thought.

At any rate, he continued more briskly, he was looking for lodgings then, just a room to put up for a while in, and a clean table. It was n't so much consequence — the food.

At that Mr. Campbell became very business-like. "Ther' war the Palace Hotel," he began, proud of the name; "but it war full, — some punchers war over from the Chiricahua Co., and ther war no tamperin' with their bunks. Knowed a fellar's ridden out o' town during the early days in same burg' for using the hands' blankets overnight. S'posed to be off'n four days' drunk,

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but got back. Money give out, he suspect. Drink more or less on either side, an' nothin' 'd privented bloodshed."

Mr. Garnet would not go to the Palace Hotel.

"There was two others places, both wimmin folks. Fust fairly good sort of house, kept by Widder Luster, — d'sarvin' sort of female: only fault any one could find with the widder was the s'reptitious existence of Mr. Luster. Fellars kicked a little over that."

Claude looked over the dry, endless country, and wished he could laugh with some one at that. He wanted to hear of the other widow.

He wanted to know if Mr. Fitzsimmons were surely dead.

Mr. Campbell guessed "yes."

"'D seen his head shot off hissen, 'n' pallbeared him 's well."

It was very convincing, so Claude went to call on the widder his own se'f, as little Don Weffold often expressed it, when he disintegrated his soul from that bland and omnipresent brute's, — the elephant, — or his very vivid recollections of Bax's lonely little boyhood.

After all, we are but the outcome of many generations, many boyhoods, many longing hopes, great joys, and many, many disappointments, little Don, so they should not have laughed at you. With Claude, it was a new self, too, one

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seemingly very separate from the young New Yorker. He doubted if his success as a son and brother, even as the very successful ruler of that distant household, had much to do with his success or failure now. He did not know much about dealing with men, and had told Dick so on the latter's proposal.

"I don't know that it is something you can learn in school," Dick had answered, in his characteristic fashion.

Then he ended very seriously: "It is the first principle of life, I think, Claude. Be true."

He gave a side-look at the serious-faced young fellow: "You won't have to go far out of your way, my boy."

Claude flushed a trifle sensitively. The sweetest part of such praise was his own pleasure in it. It made him unworthy in his own judgment.

"I'll go, Dick," he said.

"Bravo," cried this Bohemian, gayly. He felt a pang at parting with the lad,—some way Claude had ever been like a third woman about the house,—some one to add to his welcome.

"Bravo, my son," he cried. "I shall trust you to unravel the tangle, subdue our arch enemy, old Weffold, make the men satisfied with their surroundings, and keep me up to this brand of cigars. I am spoiled by them," and he lit one right there as he spoke.

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Mrs. Fitzsimmons was of Scotch parentage, and prided herself on never appearing overcome by anything of earthly character. To Mr. Campbell's chagrin, it seemed nothing to her that a Garnet was to dine off her humble board. I do not know whether this was the result of a life of continual disappointment, or her noble birth; as Boston Jim (who seemed the standard authority) was responsible for the rumor that she was the eldest daughter of a Scotch laird. If this be false, it is a stain on Mr. Boston Jim only; but if it be true, it is to be acknowledged by all her boarders that she reflected much credit on this distinguished parent as a cook.

Claude found it both clean and wholesome, and did not worry over the prophecy entertained by the remainder of the table, that the kitchen would be insufferable in winter, — when she had to move her stove inside the house.

Without aggravated assistance from either eye or ear, Claude knew his landlady to be the mother of six small Fitzsimmons, who, hand in hand, by daylight swelled the floating population of Hope. He carried candy in his pockets for them, and judged that they went in numbers so as to combine the geographical intelligence of each, — being under six or so.

“The apple does not roll far from the tree,” to quote an old saying. The little Fitzsimmons

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made no pretension to the dissipations some find in the mere thought of living. Their mother worked hard for a living, and their father, unfortunately, had had his head shot off. We are products.

These little ones were seldom home. They threw no stones in the path of their bread and butter.

Mrs. Fitzsimmons was rather cold to Claude because he was a Garnet; but as he was very just himself, he did not hold this erring a bit on the right side against her, so one day he said to her:

"You have six children, Mrs. Fitzsimmons. I have seen but four."

Her voice was not unpleasant to one for all a certain acquired resentment mingled surlily with the burr.

"I ha' no wish to inflict the bairnies on my roomers," she said.

"I can appreciate your thinking that," answered Claude. "Yours is a delicate position. But even among roomers there may be the necessary exception, now and again. I like children."

"The second one," she said at once, "fetched and carried up to Garnet's. Eight was young to rake in the heavy tailings. The older ones were apt to impose on him."

Claude heard this as if he were not a Garnet, just in the same way that she had told it. He

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was too new to flaunt his authority, and boom a reformation, before he felt sure of its chance in the place, so he just kept silent, but remembered.

Her eldest boy worked also, she told him ; and when he would have asked more, something instinctively forbade him. Later, Mr. Campbell told Claude this was her "deg gun pride : poor folks hed no right fer to hev it — wimmin, least ways of all." Boston Jim might have traced the mist-enveloped Scotch laird in that.

Claude learned all he wanted to know from the child's own conversation. It crept through the cracks of Mrs. Fitzsimmons' boarding house, and permeated the food one guest at least was eating.

It seemed he worked for a heathen Chinese, Lon by name,—that was all the mystery. Claude was engulfed by the magnitude of the question. He had heard a great deal about Chinese labor in our country ; but until Mrs. Fitzsimmons evaded locating her first bairn's occupation, Claude had never thought of the American side of the question. "It seems there'd been none but imported vegetables around and about for years," Campbell told him, "'cept amongst a priv't family or so. The miners were too busy mining, and the women-folks feel themse'f above such work. In the old country, a woman was n't afraid to raise vegetables, tend kids—work a'

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what not. 'Mericans got the idea someway as they was made of glass.

"Then a heathen Chinese come along, him and his brother. All might pass for brothers's far as he (Mr. Campbell) was consarned, though. Well, the celest'ls was in search of an opportunity, and the old Maj'r was fond of his feeding so — they hit it off. Let them a bit of his pastures — hundred dollars a year, so 'd heard — water extra.

"Jes' before Fitzsimmons was a-blowed unceremon'ous-like into 'tarnity, brother had up and deserted Lon and vegetable patch, for restaurant in town — there yet, American Restaurant."

"That is very good in itself," Claude interrupted appreciatively.

"And the vegetable fellow's trade had growed a trifle this year or more — so 's he had to keep a helper, and not a son-of-a-gun in the country was poor enough to go. Second week after Fitz had been lowered down, madam sent little Bob off to the chap. Mothers round have talked a heap on it; but one can say this for Mrs. Fitzsimmons, she don't ask no 'pinion of her neighbors, nor court none, an' what she thinks is right, 's liable to be right as 'pinion of any other woman."

Claude, seated at his dinner, could not help but hear the little lad's home-coming of evenings. Idle as he was in those first days before the mine

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was in his active possession, he found himself interested almost mechanically in trivial details and alien people. At last scraps of the conversation became doubly intelligent to him.

"I cem!" he'd hear a high little voice say on these occasions.

"So, and I see ye," she'd respond. Claude wondered if the unconscious wrong her stern heart feared she was doing the little laddie made her harsh voice unusually gentle those nights. But, ah, how near are our first-borns to us!

"In the bag, beside the vegetables for you, mither," — that was as broad as the fictitious laird's ever could have been, that last, neither o nor e nor i, all, and yet none, — "is a watermilin for the little folks. An' will ye save a piece for Jamie? We ate it all up on him las' time."

"Yes, and how is the fine new lady down at the ranch? Did she feed the turkeygobble again to-day in her party dress, Bobbie?"

Now, in frontier talk, it was this little breadwinner who was the widder's right bower those days. And whatever he did not learn about Chinese gardening, he made up on the great Weffold family, Claude inferred.

For every day the owner of this illustrious name (when combined) made furtive little trips from Lon's field to real Weffold's to ask hopeless little questions about the time:

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"Is it five o'clock yet, Mees Bax?" he'd ask at 9.30 or thereabouts.

"No," she would answer, her big pity conquering a lesser inclination to laugh. "You're not going to forget lunch-time, Rob, are you?" He'd slink away (mostly with his little hand filled from the Weffold larder), and come back, say in a half-hour again :

"What o'clock is it now, Mis' Weffold? I thought it might be near night noo," — he always ended up very droopy-lipped and Scotch.

In this manner, Claude heard much of the talk from Weffold's, and, without acknowledging it, this satisfied a certain hunger ; for since a chance suspicion had lit his identity of the fair young stranger, Weffold's had become as salt unto bread to him.

He, superintendent of the Garnet mine and Atlas of the Garnet fortunes, found a keen, foolish, filling pleasure in such childish observations as this :

"Mither, the new young leddy never seed a duck in a storm before. She clapped her hands over her ears to-day, and ran when the thunder came like it do of a sudden. Her feet, I think, are as little as Marj'rie's, if 't were in a shoe with a point and laced tight-like at the ankles."

(Marj'rie was four the coming winter !)

"You must learn more of beans and onions, and less of fine ladies, boy."

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But he could not. His mouth must have gone open, and his legs ceased to be active during those wonderful first days of Robbie Laurence at the ranch. She was like no human woman Hope had ever seen before. She had white skin, he told his mother, with no yaller to it, like other women in Arizona; and yet no great mar of freckles, like Jamie had. And for all her feet were so very little, she went light on them like the very wind; while only yesterday, as she flew down the road, holding on to the hand of little Don Weffold, her hair went to slip, and, before she caught it, she looked like the picture of Cinderella as she ran away from the party, in the story the Sunday-school gave last Christmas off their tree; only her skirts were longer.

On Claude's fourth night at Hope, and his first night as official controller of the Garnet mine, the widder, while serving him as usual, said, with unexpected warmth, to him:

"It's a great jest the town has on some young gallants this day."

He looked up smiling. "The men at the mine were having their laugh over something, but my being a stranger lets me out of a great deal, I imagine," he replied.

For the first time her set sameness of expression showed an inclination to relax.

"It's a good joke on some one," she said, in

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the proudest trips and rolls of her tongue, "and I say it is the men, this once. A band o' them went up last night, serenading the city young lady. And while the young galoots were a playing to the moon outside her winder, she slept with never so much as even a clap of her hands for 'em. And a sensible lass, it is! Give it to young 'Nito, if you see him. They say he has an eye on the girl, and goes four or five times in the day now t' Weffold's, making like it is orders from the store. The girl as is sister, so they tell me, t' young madam there."

She stepped off, and then came back, as if impelled to do it. But her face was half turned away, so keen are Scotch hearts for protecting their secrets.

"I mind Fitz saying once," she said, with a simple tenderness in her very false shame, "any one who could sleep through Mart Wheeler's fiddling need hev no fear of Gabr'el or Judgment Day."

Claude could not laugh, — it was so yearning, yet unexpected a mention.

So he said, "Good!" rather awkwardly.

TWO LETTERS

ON this very evening, Claude wrote Dick some full particulars about the mine. He felt that he should do it, yet his mind was on neither the work nor his brother.

In conclusion he wrote, "Get the children to kiss the mütter for me one hundred times, if she can stand it, as I think that is the regular dose, and tell her I will write to-morrow. There is nothing much to say to-night," et cetera.

But on second thoughts he drew the paper to him, and commenced :

DEAR MOTHER: — I am in this wonderful Arizona at last, and yet, for all the proverbial hospitality of the West and this great frontiersland in particular, I find I am much of a stranger still. No one has taken me under his wing, nor hers, for that matter. You can't understand such execrable judgment, can you, mother o' mine? Those rose-colored glasses are dear to a fellow this far away from home. Well, to continue, even Dick's siren of sirens has let me completely alone, — she who smiled on the Devil in the midst of his labors, and has kept him flirting desperately ever since; for they have to tell this to enforce it, — the good work of destruction is but half performed.

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I want to answer some of those questions I know you are pondering these days. I am going to answer them before you ask them. Is it the love or vanity of my divination, dear?

I am not ashamed of having been homesick that first evening on the train — of not rebelling against it, but wishing I had some one near me to tell the feeling to. That dear old solitude confession of ours and Cowper's, — was it not?

I felt you were following my thoughts those days, and both of us were re-living the pros and cons of Dick's proposition about the Garnet mine and me. We imagined I needed *you* too much! Dick said one night: We have not forgotten — "A man is an individual and not merely a son."

This brief suggestion, mother, did more than the most eloquent argument could have done for me. I might have lived on forever, a gentle, faithful sort of lad enough; life asks more of us. Ever, as time goes on, the call of Duty must needs get fainter, unless we train our ear to the cry.

It is not hard to give a son to a cause which is worthy. You shall help me earn my manhood, mother. We shall keep the call of the world in our ears. The giving to the world of one's manhood is the sacrifice asked of our love; *noblesse oblige*, my dear!

He did not try to read it over. Battling with a certain wondering distress, he rose and went to his humble window. He tried to pull himself together, without analyzing what caused the com-

Two Letters

plexness of this letter. It was to his mother, to his best friend, to the sharer of every confidence in his life. His position had been a singularly solitary one. His father had died in his very earliest infancy, and left him and three step-brothers entirely in the mother's care. Claude realized the magnitude of her responsibilities. He had felt the strain of their leaning on her, as his reverence gained the strength of years. It was barely perceptible at first; when the weight grew more, it was so gradual, one failed to stir now and again in the restlessness of rebellion.

They were kind, clever, handsome fellows — all three. They had fortunes to guard and direct. There was great love and happiness amongst them all; but Claude knew it had weighed on the stepmother's mind and heart. He remembered — a mere lad himself — how she had broken down with all the weariness of some felt failure, when Ralph reached twenty-one. She was no longer their guardian, she said, yet she should be still, she was sure! The relinquishment was a relief, with many misgivings. She had money of her own for Claude; but her sensitiveness of duty kept her protection toward her stepsons very keen.

Then had come Dick's trouble.

He had called on Ralph and Edward first; but until they were forced to an investigation, they

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had never grasped the emptiness of the bubble they called their daily lives. The fortunes had gone, with barely a clew to their flight.

They had speculated, lived beyond their means, married extravagant wives, been fêted society gamblers. "The little girl!" as they called Claude, was the only one of them all with securities which did not crumble at the mere touch.

Yet with the justice of such truly generous types, they made no advances toward the young fellow's pity. It would be like robbing a woman, they thought. Claude came up from Harvard himself. He was sick with the ugly whispers papers and men alike had about Dick. Honor was a great thing to him in that tender passionateness of his youth, perhaps as a sword is to a soldier. He had gotten home as fast as steam could take him. He found them huddled together—fretted brothers and weeping women—in the beautiful drawing-room, which was mockery No. 1; and Mrs. Ralph and Mrs. Edward were crying in a heartsick, horrified sort of way which seemed to suggest not so much the agony of the blow, but visions of Sing Sing, and what their swell friends were thinking of it, and if people suffering so intensely should not put on *black*.

Dick was jesting off and on. Claude shook hands with him:

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"I want to hear the worst of all," he said, barely twenty, very plain and dark and youthful beside the great handsome others.

Dick tried to tell him how it was. He had known there was absolutely nothing, and had used securities which were nothing to him, in a mad hope of winning some goodly competence again. He spoke lightly, not desperately. He avoided looking at his wife and his mother. He made a flippant and irrelevant remark about a colored feather in Mrs. Edward's hat. He said it was from a peacock, and denoted pride. Mr. Edward gazed out the window, his back toward them. Mr. Ralph studied the coals in the grate.

Suddenly, through the chill and stillness, a voice went like a knife through them. It was the wail of Mr. Dick's three weeks' old little girl.

Dick started, then he said very lightly: "You see there is one thing left." He drew his hand across his throat, smiling, and avoiding Mrs. Dick's eyes. She covered them all at once with her hands.

It was then that Claude became a seminary hero. He spoke very simply, in a kind, straightforward manner in which was the trace of a little smart. He knew more about business than they thought. He was holding the reins of the runaway horse they had driven, and as if he knew

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what he was about, at that. He spoke for his mother and himself. He said money was nothing except it be a bond; it was never intended for a crown,—this was parenthetical, very old and sad and grave, as if he'd picked it up from Henry George or some such Capital and Labor Giant,—a bond between the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the fortunate and the suffering.

It would be worse than unkindness for Dick to refuse his money. Mr. Edward stared harder than ever out the window. Mr. Ralph was leaning over, and making a great clatter about the grate.

Suddenly, in the midst of his protestations, Dick caught sight of four women, as of one face. He said not a word, but got up and walked around the table, laying his hand on Claude's shoulder. The pathos was now wider than the grotesqueness. He was warning Claude against himself. He said :

“You must think twice, laddie, I know nothing about you—your hopes or your plans. It is not to my credit; but the key to all paths is money, my boy. You have your own future. This will blow over. You must not, Claude, you must not. It is as much as a brother would do.”

Dick tried to look some place where there was n't a woman. No light jest rose to his falter-

Two Letters

ing lips. Suddenly out of the trembling assembly a woman stepped toward Claude. She forgot that he was the benefactor, they the beneficiaries. Her eyes were full of pity. She had seen the bitterness of the outsider in his face. She reached out her hand and took his kindly, the sense of debt being lost in that moment forever. She did not look at Dick, or at one of the others.

“You are teaching us what brotherhood is, dear Claude,” she said.

In the haze and daze of crowding memories, Claude laid the deed at his mother's door. It was her training. Just at that moment, he had felt that the actual money given seemed nothing ever to be regretted. Without speaking a word to her, Claude had known she would have told him to do this. The doing it without the asking was only one of the tender compliments he thought of now and again to surprise her. In her eyes, he thought her own love was better demonstrated by it.

To-night, for the first time in his life, he felt the force of Dick's kindly little shaft. He did not understand it all. In the same way he could not at once acknowledge that he had slipped his boyhood forever at last. New forces were at work within him. It was his first day as unadvised steward of a vast estate. He thought that it was

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this which made him write the same words as formerly, and yet not feel suited.

Meanwhile, unseen, his retarded individuality fought to grasp itself as a conscious and powerful possession. Unsatisfied, the young fellow gazed long out of his window. Without being aware of his thoughts, his eyes took the direction of Weffold's.

A great loneliness took possession of him. Unable to break old ties, or comprehend new ones, suddenly he commenced writing again.

He changed the tenor slightly. He became gossipy and jocose. There was a trace of Dick in it.

He told of the little Fitzsimmons lad, and bade the mother re-tell the joke to the boys, — a Robert Fitzsimmons, aged ten with no muscles, many freckles, and anything but a prize-ring look. He wrote of his landlady. He drew a happy sketch of the dining-room, the great, heavy regulation cups, and the cracks in the walls, and the stove's summering out in the rough little shed, and how once, like the famous Prince and the hot cakes, he had been called upon to turn chef one evening, and acquitted himself with great credit.

Then he told of the Weffolds, father and son. He knew how the reader's heart would yearn over the sad, strange, little story, and he wove the

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tender little romances through it which Shorty had narrated on the stage. He portrayed the different men he had met with fresh yet-satirical humor. His words grew more unlike him as he went on.

He wrote comically of his day at the mine.

There was a vein of kingly solitariness in his quaint observation on his one friend, — the imperturbable Mr. Campbell.

“Simmons (the book-keeper) introduced me to the men,” he wrote. “It was my own idea,” this was rather wistful; “I wanted them to know me as a new hand. There were several hundred of them, yet not one I could gain a responsive look from. Mother, the whole world is more than willing to ‘hae its doots,’ I fear, rather than hope and faith in each other. There will be much to surmount, perhaps, but the end will be worthy the labor.

“We ran across Campbell presently. I can’t tell you how glad I was to see him, but that was my first lesson. He would not see me.”

He knew she would understand his thoughts on the subject, so he simply wrote :

“The book-keeper spoke afterwards on the matter. (He seems a worldly, capable, well-placed fellow, tell Dick.) He said these things are better so — at least for the present. I know you will be glad to learn that I have a man here

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whom I care to follow. It is the man of whom Dick told us, and I am constantly hearing so much. I think him the simplest yet grandest fellow since Denton, the professor who died during my freshman year at college.

“‘In Memoriam’ might have been written about such men as these, ‘All subtilizing intellect . . . all comprehensive tenderness,’—it conjures the image!

“I lost my opportunity of meeting Bax Wef-fold to-day. He called at the mine during my absence, but to-morrow I shall seek him. I shall try to establish the peace you all long for and expect. There are grumblings, but no pronounced ill-feeling. You will have faith in the work of my hands, I am sure, and in my turn I shall try to justify it.”

His hand moved mechanically over the sheet, like inarticulate murmurs. He was not making words or sense. Presently the pen stuck and spluttered.

He pushed his chair back passionately, and once more strode to the window. He did not recognize himself. He looked out once more, and once more, his eyes strayed towards Weffold's; only this time he was conscious of the gaze. He forgot his long, tranquil, simple boyhood.

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He forgot he had ever lived in New York. Life seemed to date from a certain marvellous morning when he had stood outside the Short's Hotel and heard a man snoring as he looked into that little stranger's eyes.

His heart throbbed as it had never done before in extremest joy or sorrow. In that manner he may have grown as much older as it seemed afterward.

So long as lamps glowed in those distant windows, he stood. In that strange draining sort of stare he emerged from the shadow-land of youth, with its beautiful enveloping mists and lofty far-off illusions.

He touched the great substantial prizes men are aiming for constantly. He drifted far away from his mother; but it was the waters of experience he set sail on, and the currents will bring us back again.

The loneliness crept over, clung to, sank in him. The world receded. Hope alone was left — a little battle-field he stood alone on, with no shield, no sword, save his gentle heart.

The issues became enormous. Once — this is only human nature — their height became satirically marred :

“ Yer can't guess the great josh they're heving on yer, Weffold's way. There's a form of ill feeling — jealousy, as some might call it — 'tween them and the Garnet men. They call yer ' Jack

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the Giant Killer' down to there" — and then choruses of his mighty laughter.

It cut, under the circumstances. Claude threw back his head, as if he were suffering.

When his eyes wandered again to Weffold's, the lights were out.

Then he re-wrote his mother's letter, leaving a waste of charred and smudgy paper for Mrs. Fitzsimmons to clear away the next day. He tried to crowd the débris on to his candle-stick with a certain gentle sensitiveness to his fingers, as if it were something which once had lived.

His hand moved mechanically rather than was bid. Eventually he saw that he had written barely half a sheet. There seemed a certain vague significance to the merely accidental fact that it was written on the letter-head of their great syndicate.

"DEAR MOTHER, — I am singularly tired to-night, so I won't try to bore you. The dear old home is as usual, I trust? For the rest, Dick will read his letter to you — yet, on a day like this, I want to add one line or so of my own to prove the gratitude and humble affection of one who owes his past to you."

He bore down a little on the three letters. Presently he simply added this as if it were part of the whole thought —

"Whatever the future may hold.

"CLAUDE."

A BRANDING SCENE

IT was four o'clock in the afternoon. Great dray horses and heavy wagons toiled up the road warmly. Claude passed these from time to time. The sky was one vast canopy of intense blue with no finely feminine effect in lace. Now that is both poetic and Campbellite, if you knew it. It means clouds were strictly tabooed.

As for the country where this occurred, much cannot be said about it unless one repeats unto the seventieth time, so I will try to say the little. You should give a child a piece of paper, so, and imagine it to be colored brown and then to have faded yellow; and on this draw the rude outlines of barren hills and those immense wastes of old mother earth little children delight in. Then the spear of grass or so is as inevitable as the little house they'll dot down on the bleakest desert or highest hill—the little house we too drew when we were little children—the middle door, and the sloping roof, and the little many-paned country windows, the back entrance to this edifice being ever studiously left out.

In the Country God Forgot

Claude was on his way to Weffold's. He spoke to a teamster or so as he walked along, and they called back something to him which was rather inarticulate, yet pleasant, he judged. He was rather a contrast to them, and, as he passed, they made some such remarks as this, one to another :

"He ain't much for size—funny how sich little men get all the brains."

"Dunno as it is brains so much as luck—though can't, for my part, see what size hes to do with it."

"Size hes, I say,—since I was borned seemed tuk fur hard draft some kind—Brother Josh, now he was little fellow, fell right into snap t' once. Jes' has to set all day on stool in elevator—holiday whenever a boss dies."

After a long while he added: "Wholesale building in N' Orleans."

"Two story building, s'pose?"

"Guess, yes!"

"S'pose large 's hotel at Tucson?"

"Spect's something like it."

"Mebbe higher?"

"'Tain't ever been my way to swear on word of my relations. Everything relations tell ye more than likely to be a fill. Take ye to practise on. If it's s'cessful, spring it around likewise. So jes' because Josh said it was *eight* stories, 'tain't my way to spread his yarn."

A Branding Scene

“That *is* a good ’un. Great josher, yer brother, I guess?”

“’Tain’t I mistrust mebbe there is buildings higher in New York or Lunnon, but no whar else.”

“Guess, maybe, ’Frisco?”

Both laughed. It touched their very hearts, that name. It represented ten times more than London or Paris to them. It was a Carcassonne which was not too far off. Some day they intended to go there,—some year when the red lights had not burned too brightly, and they had resisted the inclination to empty their hard-earned money into the tills of the Palace Saloon. They had great dreams of the long ride on the train—the fairy-land they would pass through in Southern California. It was printed on a fence or hut now and again by that wonderful Railroad Company which their ’Frisco paper caricatured so heavily. But the honor of a great Railroad Company is too immense a subject for me to be responsible for.

They had ideas, too, of going into some of these wonderful high hotels and saying in an off-hand manner: “Guess *ground* floor will do if y’ please,” and then *sotto voce*, to their Self-esteem and Self-protection—“ain’t got no dam green sucker this time to make no bon-fire of—middle of night.”

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But meanwhile they laughed at 'Frisco. She is the little girl who is before the foot-lights out West. They hear great stories of her; how she can dance and laugh and coquette and kick high — far above her staidier sisters. And the West goes mad about her because she is their very own. They knew her when she was a baby. They forget the possible shame in the joy of her being somebody. Bad, mad, wild little girl!

Then we in the flies see the acting done and the folly finished.

And we see the little player in her humble gown run forth in the night to some humble dwelling where burns a household fire on a virtuous hearth. And we smile and say like good old à Kempis: "What matter if speech be good or ill? This is real San Francisco — courage and love and virtue. We will let such cities and such women guard their own. They are worthy."

What matter if speech be good or ill?

The driver touched up the team with his light harmless switching about their sides. He snapped the long thong with the quick hand of a master — heavy a fellow as he was. His companion shied bits of rubbish from his pocket at the horses' ears. Presently he said, not sheepish, but with good, round interest:

A Branding Scene

"'Nother thing I hern lots about in a big city, 'tain't up to country in my way of thinking. Fellow has to be pretty careful of his actions. It's the *cops*. Guess they're pretty b'lligerent."

They went on arguing it out. Of course they meant policemen. It occurred to one that this body of men lay in wait for strangers as well as evil-doers, for the innocent as well as guilty, and waged war against them according to its own sweet mood. He thought there o' t' be something to forbid 'em, like vigilance committee of citizens. He s'posed if a man looked cross-eyed, — whop! and he'd go in jail! It was a vague terror, which hovered over that dream of a 'Frisco trip.

The driver did n't know. Had 'n' hern they was a hard crowd altogether. Fur his part, though, guessed if a fellow kept in fair good practice, and hed no reason fur to feel white-livered, guessed his right arm might 'complish wonders; if needs be, there was his gun.

Perhaps in the very team behind this another conversation was taking place.

It said:

"There is the young superintendent gone a-sparking Weffold's girl, I guess."

"Who is girl to Weffold?"

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"Mees Bax's sister. Got as pretty a look on horse as Mees Bax's self almost."

"I knowed the time Mees Bax was a-frighted plum to death at mere sight of a bronco. Hern her sister'd come, but scarce believe it? So young Garnet's soft on the Eastern gel, is he — where'd hear that?"

"Wal, Shorty drove 'em in together. 'N' Boston Jim r'sponsible fur the saying that he surmised 'em to be man and wife, a-keeping it secret. Something about 'em led him to think on it."

"Guess that's not straight from present 'ndications."

"No, surmise not. Boston's a great one to spin a yarn. Done almos' everything for a livin', Boston Jim. Oncet use ter type-set on papers, and hearin' so much's ain't true, doubtless disfiggered his brain a trifle; but should n't wonder if they made a match on it. Kind of coincident'l like, unless they came together on purpose. Then it's sure pop."

"Well that may be. Campbell hes' 'spres-sion covers the case, to my mind. 'Them as has ull get.' 'T would n't have hurt him to have set up to some of the girls in town. Dick Garnet made his money here, and it would n't have hurt this fellar to intermingle like with real population. S'm mighty fine girls in town. Gal to

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Weffold's stuck up like, I jedge, Mees Bax was afore her."

"Don't think Mees Bax kind you call stuck-up woman. Never go t' the ranch for my part, but spreads out lunch or dinner with 'r own hands, after unloading or loading is done, and has a kind word to speak for the missus. Don't call Mees Bax zactly stuck up."

These were the men Claude passed from time to time. He took the wide path, by and by, along the barbed wire fence which separated the range from the public.

He came gradually to the inner yards. Busy hens scurried out now and then, to fly back as he approached them.

A little sickly, useless calf lay amongst some attempt at a garden. It had a bowl of milk placed very near, and nosed at it now and again wearily. A tin soldier of little Don Weffold's was placed under a stunted fruit tree. He was plainly guarding the invalid. The adobe house he then came across was of a better class than the town dwellings even of like nature,—though it was not up to the new-fangled mine building which he was to have had.

It was dull red, as is natural, and a story and a half in height. The door stood wide open, and displayed a cheery yet cramped little hall. Cur-

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tains (home-made), such as might belong to some pretty flat in a city, completely transfigured the front.

It told of that anomaly which alone can transform such scant accommodations in remote wilds like this, — a woman's presence and a lady's taste.

Dick had once entered the same little gate, a tramp, a man with barely soles to his shoes; a blot on the prosperity of the country. The gate was still manipulated by the same rusty earth-filled cans. Perhaps the same — let us not go into the subject. The path was very pretty, very short; and yet on it some rose-bushes with a little faint bloom or so, far apart, were fighting desperately for air enough to breathe and live. A great sturdy cactus grew near the stoop. It needed no rain, no toil, no hopes and doubts lavished on it. It was a queer old plant to the little future Weffold of all. "It no is a plant," — he had talked it out to Bax one night, "God no could make, poppie; him prickles stick God's hands."

And Bax said nought of the infiniteness of that wonderful God which came to his little lad's lips so often. He knew very little himself. And he had only learned it from love, not lessons; so he drew the little form near, and said with that mock seriousness so dear to children:

A Branding Scene

“The cactus is a great clock; so it does not matter much who made it, so long as we do what the clock tells little boys.”

It was a bright way of getting the child to bed, when the great red-winged grasshoppers went to “roosth” at night on each long, pointed leaf. Don grasped such simple facts and made quaint combinations of them. He never doubted the suggested tie. Often his lone little self he would go out toward the pretty twilight, and see these ugly things which were God’s, like himself, climbing up the leaves. He watched them wonderingly. Then he would go and stand tiredly against his mother. All his friends had gone to bed, she knew. Something lonely in his little leaning form would tell her: His bed time, poor little man! Ah! it is sweet to be one of God’s very own — a little child in the country.

Sal wandered out from somewhere soon. She told Claude the Maj’r was off, Lawd-knows-where, as if it were a resort of some kind. Mr. Bax had taken the young lady and his own folks down to the tail-end of a round-up just below. Did he want to see Mr. Bax or the ladies? Well, if he wanted to see them all, they was down a bit, on the road, where he could *see* the running around and the hollering.

Claude walked off with apparent calmness in the direction named.

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She wondered why a young man like him, who could afford it, did not wear a diamond or so on his hand and more in his shirt-front. In his turn, he tried to solve her reason for asking him which member of the family he was particularly in search of, since all were in one place.

As he neared the scene ahead, he became tossed and torn, figuratively speaking, by the one overwhelming desire, — that they like him.

He, Claude Garnet, hero of Sunday morning magazines and seminaries, a person not afraid of cops, nor sky-splitting edifices, nor that thing with a woman's fair face for men — the gambling evil.

He saw a strange and vivid scene. The sun was not so warm as the blue of the sky. It seemed a diffusion. Underneath, on the little plain which lay between the south hills and Wef-fold's, Claude caught sharp moving views of men and cattle.

There were ten men or so. They seemed to represent the cow-boy proper, but that is a stage name for him. On his own heath he is a cow-puncher.

When the little scene was nearing its end there were no cows in sight to speak of. In the distance their occasional bellowing was kept up, as if in wondering protest still.

A Branding Scene

The men had not dispersed. It had not taken more than half an hour or so, and they were still standing rather undecided what to do. One of them started to scatter the dying, branding fire with his foot, casting furtive glances as he did so toward the ladies. Bax Weffold said kindly then :

“Boys, you have met my wife. I want to introduce my sister-in-law to you.”

He slipped off his horse as he spoke, and stood in the little group amongst them. Some of the lassoers were mounted still. A few figures, fantastically shirted and sombrely breeched, stepped off a bit for their horses, which were standing patiently here and there.

An elderly fellow answered Bax. He had passed the time of women, but not of wine and cards. It was said he had once done tricky work in some Southern Senate and stepped across the border to avoid the consequences. “I became too popular, boys,” he was wont to conclude, rubbing his formerly sleek hands and smiling. Down amongst the cows and the cactus, the glory of our birth-right and the mess of pottage become hopelessly involved someway.

“Thanks to you, Weffold,” he said with that suave charm of voice and manner no frontiersland can bear, less breed. “No, but thanks to you, Weffold. It won’t be worth while for Mrs. Wef-

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fold — she has a hard enough time enduring the country without mothering us hungry whelps to boot.”

Bax did not try to speak. He was not deceived. He knew it was not Mrs. Weffold, nor the thought of supper, nor any flimsy conventional excuse such as that. He had lived too long in Arizona. He had been too long her son. He had fought too long with the thing whose strength he now felt, as men can feel in conflict the strength and passion of their foe. There was an almost irresistible brotherhood in the words he next uttered ; yet these were all :

“Walk over with me, boys ; come, put up your horses. My tall girl won’t take no, I am sure.”

He said it simply, as a man might speak of his wife to his friends. The former superintendent had criticised this once.

“Weffold shows his country training in those little ways,” he said. He was an ignorant man, and did not know the wooden fence between rich and poor, haughty and humble, was merely a mythical one. Many people do not know it, though they long since ceased believing in Santa Claus.

He stood amongst them. He was not belittling his position as their master — rather aggrandizing the purpose of all life. His keen eyes swept the crowd. They did not meet his gaze.

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They were looking with shifty indecision at the ringleader, who had once become too popular. They would go to Weffold's if he said so. Another time they might have gone anyway, just because Bax Weffold asked them.

Bax's gaze rested on the man in question. This latter did not look so complacent as formerly. His cheek-bones had colored a bit, and his eyes gained a sort of glitter, as if the burden of these many minds had hold of his every nerve and impulse.

"We 'd planned a little time up-town," he commenced, and someway, at the very thought of renunciation, the thirst became too much for him. His tone changed ; it grew tarter. Every man grasped his bridle at it, and the waiting horses responded instantly.

"We will put on to Hope," he said, "and see what's doing. Thanks to you, Weffold, no !"

They made a fine sight as they rode off. They rode in a bunch, upright, well clad, touched by their bits of color.

As they passed Mrs. Bax and the little lad and the sister, every hat went off as with one accord. City men could not have done it with more respect. Then they put on to town, a straight line and an unswerving purpose in the cause of

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evil. Would Right were able to command the same!

They were soon lost in a cloud of dust.

Rel turned impetuously :

"We'll walk on. Let Bax overtake us. He looks so *funny* after his temperance efforts fail."

"Do they always?" asked Robbie.

"Nearly always," responded his wife. She wrestled a bit with her own humor. Suddenly she cried out feebly :

"Oh, Robbie, Robbie, it is almost dreadful to love every outcast and scamp in creation through a child."

Robbie did not make much answer. She did not even seem to be listening. Her color was more uneven. Now and again she turned and cast a look behind her toward her brother-in-law. He stood a while just as they had left him. Then another figure stepped from the plain and joined him.

After that Robbie ran on with the child. She startled him into shrill, joyous laughter.

Mrs. Bax smiled as she heard it, half unconsciously.

ON WOMAN — “IN OUR HOURS OF EASE ”

CLAUDE hesitated as he reached Weffold.
“ I ’m afraid I cannot accept your kind
invitation to supper. My landlady ex-
pects me at home.”

Bax smiled.

“ That is what my sister-in-law calls a municip-
al subterfuge,” he said, keeping the gate open.
“ She has dropped hers here.”

Claude passed before him silently. He had no
idle words for this great quiet-toned fellow ; and
we are apt to speak idly after dwelling in the
city — the best of us.

The front of the house lay in a cool, wide
shadow. There was no porch ; only a wooden
stoop and some great common chairs scattered
here and there near it. The two men made for
these, and sat down in attitudes characteristic of
them.

Around Bax Weffold was the constant calm of
a man who had been dealt his hand and was
playing, but against luck, courageously. There
was not much hope in it — there never had been,

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for the matter of that. But there is something almost heroic in laying down losing cards steadily. He was a careful player. Some day he would rise from the table and call for help from God, for there are times when less will not suffice us.

But just now the element of doom was crushed for the time by the good motive he'd had for gambling. Without that motive his play might not have been so steady — quite.

His head, bared, with that soft, thick, unruly hair on his forehead, was that of a scholar. Under such circumstances, his eyes would have been very handsome and intelligent, the very least one said of them; but in Bax they were simply and soulfully his own. One grew to know a strange man through them. Robbie did not know what they held until after a certain study. Then it was the plains, some books, and a woman, she said.

He gave but one look at the face before him; now the opportunity had come. There was something of the young man with much before him in Claude's position just then. He was leaning a little forward and studying Bax Weffold eagerly, in the way young people have of forgetting hypocrisy.

His face was pale, clean-shaved, very boyish. He had taken off his hat for some wild idea of

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manners, which Arizona is not up to just yet, and his hair lay black, close, and rather trim above his very ordinary forehead. Speaking ever so kindly, as authors will, it was the clean, kind face of a gentleman; but, to quote Miss Laurence, there was n't a single feature significant enough to honor his distinction as a millionaire, though she left untold just what sort of a nose might do it.

To Bax the simplicity was an almost pitiful appeal. We are so directly young and unnecessarily responsible but once. It was the stamp of an educated soul, however inexperienced its owner. Many of the young experts and speculators from the East had a far greater dash in their manner. They almost rattled their money through their speech. It is not the man who does this who is familiar now, or was in generations past, with riches.

"I should like Don to grow up into just such a young fellow," he said that night under the heavenly sky ("star-sown," that is also Mr. Lowell) to the woman who was a component part to his eyes.

She looked up as they walked.

"You are paying him the greatest compliment you can, Bax, if you only knew it; only I can't be that liberal, dear stupid. There is another man Don must grow more and more like, until

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he is just that image. He is my little child, and my hope is not stunted for him ; but sometimes it almost seems he can't. No — one — can."

These last words fell into the darkness softly ; so quietly, we can call it murmured. Bax had commenced to tease her, to say, "What man, my love?" in his cattle king, not his husband manner, but he stopped at the wealth her voice suggested. He could not bear to destroy the humor.

More than this, he knew.

There were many questions and facts Claude wanted to put to Bax Weffold,— things he was either unable to discuss with Mr. Campbell, or Mr. Campbell was unable to discuss with him. He wanted Bax to like him, to be his friend ; he wished he could strike a true note right from the start. But the first words he said had the brand of the tenderfoot on them hopelessly.

"That was a capital round-up I was lucky enough to witness," he said. "You get used to such things, being a native, but it is quite a treat for a foreigner."

Bax looked beyond him, across to the hills. He felt tired. In a very physical way he pondered briefly on "What is a man's duty to his friends in error?" Then he said gently :

"I don't think we can be that presumptuous

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to-day. It was what my wife calls play-acting for the benefit of my sister-in-law. She wanted to see a round-up, the genuine thing, she said. Of course you have never met her; but she is a young lady with a will of her own. It is not disloyal to say that. She is very proud of it, almost as much so as if it were a new bonnet.

"There is a round-up on Thursday at Skeleton Cañon. This is Tuesday. You see the young lady has been doing some good work amongst a few of the cow-punchers round and about, so several of them invited her to it. Until my wife vetoed Robbie's going, that young person had but one worry,—that of inventing legitimate excuses to the two whose invitations she did not accept."

He dragged at his moustache over a quaint little smile. "I don't know whether you've ever been in the same delicate position," he said. "One man, two quarrelling women, and one of them his wife—it almost makes one resort to feminine measures. A man would have run, I am sure, but I have been married so long now, it is rather easy to borrow a better method.

"I temporized toward this result. Our men had finished their rounding work, but some of the calves were still unbranded. I asked them to finish it here. So it was not the real thing, you see, only a very small part of it.

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"She does not know any better, and a round-up is not the place exactly for a girl to spend a day. You see it would mean that before she was finished.

"I am afraid you will think," he concluded, "we're not above municipal subterfuges after all?"

Claude answered, "No," very gravely; "not if the motive were good."

Young people are apt to be extreme on a characteristic, and soberness was one of Claude's. Then he was overwhelmed in a measure by being thrust so face to face with his divinity's life—the commonplace portion of it. Yet presently a wild and unsought joy came to him over the possible expression in her wonderfully straightforward eyes, if this childish deception on her were discovered.

"But I am not going to deceive you," said Bax. "Perhaps the mine won't need you Thursday? Simmons has proved himself a good fellow there. Our men are going over toward morning to help the fellows out. I am going too."

"Why are you going?" asked Claude abruptly.

"They need me, or I need it," he answered, smiling, not penetrating the mystery. "My tall girl has n't yet concluded just what excuse to take. You see I spent a year or so in the city—San

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Francisco — that is always the city here, — and the fogs were more than any one raised here could manage."

In all their conversation, it was the only reference he made to that leaf in his life.

"So my women folks found something to fill their hearts and heads for life, but I can't see they are very grateful for it. I am pampered unmercifully at times. Don is n't kept home with greater conscience. This has been a bad year, too. A man gets sick for the rain."

Claude did not feel the real homesickness in this next.

"I could not give up going Thursday. It will be my first round-up this year. What I've been coming to, Mr. Garnet —"

"Just Garnet, if you please," said Claude. That, too, was very boyish, and was accompanied by a bashful flush.

"Garnet, is an invitation to get up at three o'clock, to come down here by starlight, and ride a Weffold mustang over to the camp with us; to get thrown if you don't know how to ride; but you do, I am sure of that.

"To rough it all day; to try some of old Bill's famous hot bread and not get indigestion, you're working so hard with the herd; to see the boys master that wild mass of cattle; to see starlight fade; and day come and go; to —"

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He caught himself up with a little funny impatience.

"To live for a day," ended Bax.

A flush was well over Claude's face again, but this time it looked merely grateful.

"Thank you, and I'll come," he said.

They did not speak then for several minutes; and in this time a child clad in leathern breeches, a miniature undress shirt, such as is affected by cow-boys, a great collar to boot, and a rough steeple-crowned form of straw sombrero, appeared around the corner of the house. The hat slanted away from his face, and showed it with tender grave little curves, all dyed a very tender comical little brown. He watched them with great wide eyes, and then circled solemnly off, still looking.

"He looks very much like you," Claude remarked with no other preface.

"Yes, so they say," answered Bax, "except the hair."

His love was too great and simple to feel such little home distinctions as this might be insignificant to a stranger. He held out his arms, and said, "Come, Don;" and still watching Claude and making a wide path around him, the child reached his father's embrace. He had a canton flannel elephant in his arms—once gray, now very dirty. It was his sole companion. It often

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lay near to his heart. At night it snuggled close to him, borrowing much warmth from contact with the little form. It was part of his every play and hope. He wove quaint, inconsistent little stories connected with its mysterious past.

He did not seem to mind Claude now. He held on to his treasure with one arm and hugged his father. What he said was aloud, but not intended for any pair of ears but one.

"Me luvs oo worser nor any sing," it was.

"You should not let your mother hear that, little man," said Bax, trying not to look soft by smiling.

"Would his mother care?" asked Claude.

"Oh, no," returned Bax; "you mustn't mind such domestic hostilities at Weffold. It's only a way we have."

"I don't want you to ask him to shake hands with me," Claude said next, when Bax made a gesture toward the action. "I want you all to like me for myself."

He included the child with no effort at it, and those things soften a parent's heart. Bax did not try to answer the honest little hope in words. He was wont to show his best in actions.

"I don't know where my women ran," he said. "It's a way they have when a stranger's expected. It's a trace of barbarity you will learn

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to excuse, especially when they make up for it at dinner." Still he said to the little child :

"Don, where did mamma go?"

He spoke just as if they were little chums or big friends.

"Mommie go inside," said the child, "to her own room wi' Robbie."

"Wi' Aunt Robbie?"

"Wi' Robbie — ayer."

"You see," said Bax at this defeat, "Robbie's dignity won't support my grand principles of discipline in this matter. I can't make her understand it is all her fault."

"What is mamma doing," he asked, "making us something nice for supper?"

The child thought a second.

"No, mommie fixer her hair," he returned, after his little halt was ended. He had a very queer, ragged, tender-toned little speech, full of lonely little fancies; a vagrant little voice all told, as if it belonged to Dreamland. He often added *er* to conventional words, making quaint little outcasts of them, while the one-syllabled words were prim little quakers.

"This is very interesting," said Bax, not looking at his guest, yet letting the subject take a certain whimsical form of entertainment, ironical and yet droll:

"And is Robbie fixer her hair, also?"

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One could see it was a climax by Don's face, it warmed up to the subject so. Its expression was tenderly flexible to moods — the one trace of his mother in him. He waved his hands as he spoke in quaint, quick, untrained little gestures.

"Robbie acter bery naughty," he commenced. "Her pull down her hair, then put up, then when mommie say it bery pitty, her pull all down again an' scold mommie bery hard," he ended innocently.

"Ah," cried Bax, "I deserve that." He looked so sorry, Claude said, though not altogether for that reason:

"Please let him go on, I enjoy it."

A little look passed between them, and they came very much nearer understanding.

"Then what did Robbie do?" asked Bax.

"Robbie her put on a pitty dress — all white — only no *shleeves* in er — guess Robbie's night-dress — ayer? Mommie lap and say you no in city — take dat op." Bax stopped him finally at this.

"I think hospitality need n't go any further," he said to Claude with what Robbie called his married-man expression — some humor and much policy.

"I am going to call your mother," he said, and stepped off, half laughing.

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When Claude and little Weffold were quite alone, Claude leaned over and looked at the child a second. It was almost as if he were trying to prove how far a little child can be trusted. He saw the leathern breeches, the soft silky curls, the strange little tan, and through it, beautifying it all, those eyes, where innocence puts to shame distrust.

So he said: "After your mamma said that to Robbie, what did Robbie do, little man?"

"Her *cryer* — bery hard," returned the child.

While they sat looking straight at each other, Bax came and said supper was served. As they entered the low open room where they took their meals in summer, Claude saw the long trailing vines which seemed to embower the interior, as if it were a fairy room. They literally covered the wire.

Daylight was all but shut out. A lamp burned on the table, and he saw how clean and tempting it was.

"This is my wife," said his host, and a woman took his hand kindly.

To him, she was not a very pretty woman, nor wonderfully marvellous, all told. But he felt as if in time he would like her, and he admired her already, as men who have not been in a wreck admire the survivors. This woman had not

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only suffered, he felt, but saved also. It was food in a measure for his soul.

"I am very, very happy to meet you, Mr. Garnet," she said. "I bid you welcome amongst us."

After he had mumbled a grateful reply, she said (much of Shorty's grand air in it):

"My sister begs to be excused this evening. The sun must have been too much for her head, Bax."

Bax tried not to look vexed and failed. Remembering Don's betrayal, he felt impatient at them all.

As Claude took hold of his chair, he saw the introductions were not over. A man stood at the head of the table. He had shaggy, shaded eyes, and cold mouth lines, not hid by his long, prim beard. He barely waited for Bax to finish saying:

"Major Weffold — Mr. Garnet." In that voice all sonship was out.

He did not stir to extend his hand; but below the beard a laugh echoed.

"So you're the biggest man New York could find for Garnet?" he uttered.

Then they all sat down.

CAMP AND A GIRL

THE morning star, cold and bright as a diamond, had just appeared over that big gray peak to the south of Skeleton Cañon. Below all this was a waste of land which lay in immense gray silence. I spoke of the Peak. It was the same old one which has looked down on so much of the tragic that has made Skeleton Cañon a haunted spot to the punchers. There the last great scene of the Apache drama took place,—Geronimo's surrender to General Miles, in sight of the grave of poor Jud White, who had fallen the victim of an Apache bullet only one spring before. Enough cannot be said for the dawn of peace in Arizona. For the Apache warfare ever seemed like blood, shed too near the feet of civilization, as if a noble robe were being too insolently spattered.

Having prefaced this with poetic justice, you will come with me for this one day on the prairies. You will see poor Bax's morning star appear and fade out, and over the long, silent ranges day will roll like a team with a fearless driver, and Arizona will awaken again. Great herds will be

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mixed up with the vision ; strange, stalwart men move on untamed mustangs ; words fit only for silence, and only for churches, will blend profanely on your ear. There will be great meals and hearty eaters.

Suddenly as a curtain goes down in a theatre a moment before you are quite ready, the work will be ended, and the devil's play-house still.

A son of the sand hills says just this is to live. He was raised on the milk of the cows of the desert, so let us not blame him, and here goes : Old Billy the cook is already astir. His fire is blazing high ; the big coffee-pot boiling. Nothing so merry as a coffee-pot on a boil in a frontier country, unless it be the natives correspondingly active. A savory odor of fried beefsteaks and sour dough biscuits comes from the Dutch ovens old Billy guards. He sniffs now and again himself, as if well pleased with it.

He is a weather-beaten old fellow, with a twist to his face that may come from a squint in his sight. It is the way people know him ; but I do not remember exactly now. He would look very rough for a city butler, but he looks very, very mighty out here, where men get very hungry and women are scarce. It is rumored (I cannot swear to this, though) that twenty men may slap his back of a morning, but at the twenty-first rousing blow of good-fellowship, lo ! there is

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a snarl. That is not so bad for Arizona — to have one's temper twenty deep.

This shambling old Billy prides himself very justly on his sour dough biscuit. It is his masterpiece. He is famous for it, as men have been famous for great achievements since time began. It is the only bread the genus cow-boy will eat, and it must be red-hot. We groan, we city dyspeptics, at that. The sour dough biscuit would be a poisonous thought to our knowledge before the barbaric morsel ever crossed our lips. And man generally gets the evil thing which he yearns for.

Old Billy putters around awhile by himself. He chews toothlessly on his wad of tobacco. He seems as if listening.

Suddenly a distant but rollicking whistle floats rippling in, and Billy knows that the horse-herder is nearing camp with the herd. Some little note in that whistle tells how good he feels that the long night's vigil is ended.

The old cook moves mechanically. He is a sort of philosopher, I guess. He never seems very glad or sorry, except when the biscuits burn several mornings, or he is slapped twenty-one times on the back.

Between his conscientious work on the tobacco, he cries, "Chuck away!" It was a mysterious vocal symbol. At it all those heaps that before

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seemed but a part of the yellow prairie became animated one by one.

We are not swell dandies dressing under the morning star. The act of pulling on boots and spurs all at one big tug constitutes the wardrobe and ready-for-breakfast feat of these sons of the desert,—the cow-punchers, the devil-may-care sons of nature, whose home is on the saddle, and whose roof is where night overtakes them.

Breakfast is a play of strength, not grace. Each one grabs a tin plate, a knife, a fork (often an unnecessary luxury, but then we'll grow up to that), a tin cup. There is n't much Chesterfieldism in it—more a certain sturdy motion, as if each one's very life depended on quick despatch of hot bread, black coffee, and great chunks of beef.

Soon the cry of horses is heard, and a great clatter of hoofs, as the horse-herd approaches. It is a magic sound again. Plates, cups,—all are dropped as quickly as the cry of fire would start a city boarder; for the cow-puncher takes life seriously. He does not dally with time or duty. Yet you never thought it before, I bet? We must use The Language, we are in boots and spurs ourselves for to-day.

The cow-puncher must catch his day's mount. No one will do it for him, and the cow-boy who cannot rope the wildest mustang in that bunch and

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ride him to a finish would be the laughing-stock of the round-up. "Onery" they'd call him down here.

But the sun will soon be coming over Skeleton Mountain, following in the wake of the morning star, and we must be off!

They go in bunches of five or six; some to the south, down in the big hollow country, some off west toward Indian Creek, some to the north of Squaw Mountain, and some over to the mouth of Skeleton Cañon,—and all of them a-riding like mad.

Hurrah for the good blood in us!

And Billy the cook is alone (save once when a girl was with him one day, may be not this one, but that is another story—rather a later story, as Mr. Kipling says).

Old Billy the cook is alone, a vast pile of unwashed tin plates and cups before him and the noon-day dinner for forty hungry men. But he is no tenderfoot, this one. He quietly eats his own breakfast, then fills his pipe, and, sitting comfortably amid the wreck of pots and pans, he evolves from his experienced brain the bill of fare for the dinner hour—ho! but one can get hungry thinking—and slowly but easily brings order out of chaos.

All is quiet about camp. Even the rhythmic

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snore of the night-herder peacefully buried in his blankets makes the silence more marked. Nine o'clock—ten—goes by, and yet all is an Arizona stillness—a stillness almost of death.

But now a faint dust is seen way south, and soon from all directions comes a low murmuring, followed by an occasional pistol shot. The old cook hears it all. He listens—munches a bit. Standing so, grotesque and awkward, it is easy to say his thought to himself:

“The boys are getting hungry, and are shooting them up a bit.”

Soon the air is filled with a bellowing of cows and calves, and on all sides they come. It looks as though one vast wave of cattle were rolling in toward a tiny beach, where one stands. It threatens to well engulf both old Billy and the “chuck wagon.”

But Billy is not alarmed. The old cows know what it all means, and when the round-up ground is reached, they stop; and though many of the noisy youngsters rush on pell-mell, they are soon chased back by the swift cow ponies.

And this vast concourse of almost every conceivable color is the round-up. Old Billy views the group; he guesses there are four thousand head, which means a hard day's work for the boys.

Soon the noise of bellowing almost ceases. The cows and calves, the bulls, the steers,—all stand

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huddled together, wondering probably what next will happen. There is a foreman around somewhere. There are always foremen. That officer will be an indispensable enemy until the millennium. That gentleman of the outfit details a half-dozen of his men to watch the herd, and with a call, "Come on, boys," puts spurs to his horse, and with wild yells and whipping and spurring, there is a race of cow-boys for the "chuck wagon." But Billy is ready and waiting. He looks serene, fortified, as he is with a great pot of beans, another of beef, another of "spuds," and a pot of coffee which would supply an army.

Dinner is soon over; and the horse-herder stands ready with his two hundred head and more of wiry cow ponies, and soon the boys have fresh mounts, and are off to the herd.

The little play has no intermission between acts. Now the foreman details his picked men to ride in and cut out the cows with their respective calves. Many an unruly beast tries vainly to dash back, but the wiry, watchful pony with his rider checkmates every move. Very soon the cows with unbranded calves are grouped at some distance from the round-up, and then all the stray brands of cattle are put in another herd. The tired punchers drive the two herds to the big corrals, and when the bars are up, the day's work is done. "The round-up" is

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turned loose, and the tired cattle, who have so patiently stood all day, wander wearily back to their ranges. The cow-boy pulls his saddle off his faithful pony, which is now free to rustle a few mouthfuls of that yellow dry grass which is his only fare.

Supper then, and immediately to bed, for tomorrow there are five hundred calves in that big corral to brand, and that means hard work,—harder work than the miner does whose muscles are of steel.

What I have to tell you after all this is a story still told on those stretching ranges, — a cow-boy story on a city girl. So if you have read through my sketch, you can put in the girl as an illustration in those places where she belongs.

Now riding like mad (in the form of a fascinating maiden) into the camp at daybreak, or, to be more poetic, just as dawn was forcing the flight of night; one of the love-sick fellows said that (whom she left, yearning and wonder-struck at night). She impersonated Dawn, we suppose. Now peeping into a pot of spuds beside the delighted Billy, or learning how to throw a lass', which her gallant instructor would have nearly given his good right hand to have seen fall on a harmless calf to please her.

But it did n't.

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Now riding off at night toward sunset, waving at them as she faded away. And they watched, nearly every mother's son of them, until the wave grew so faint in the distance, that even as they still waited it was no more.

Old Billy had been stirring his coffee when she came. So the cow-punchers tell it this way. How as the old cook was getting the breakfast for them, a lone figure came from the West. It was not the herder. It came nearer. It had on skirts. It wore a light waist with a great tie, knotted man fashion, which swept out in the wind. A man's hat topped this gallant sight. A man's hat is as fair a sight as you'd wish to clap eyes on at a round-up, if it has a girl's face underneath.

Do not laugh you men who live in great crowded cities, and are surfeited of the sweets of life. It is told a man was there that day at the round-up, who had ridden over from his own great range for the mere pleasure of a mass of cattle. In rough language, he was often called the whitest man in Arizona. His name was Bax Weffold.

This girl who rode up was his sister-in-law. She was a tenderfoot—good 'cess to the fact. She wanted to learn every fool thing going, looking full into your eyes as she learned. The men who taught her were apt to think afterwards, she was the most beautiful creature God ever made, but probably they were mistaken, for very much

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of the judgment lay in this simple statement: there were no other women near. And the ridiculous things which she said that day! Even Bax himself was quite surprised by them, and one moment, when he got her alone, said, with his steady stare, only this time with a twinkle back of it:

"You'd make a capital soubrette, Rob. I'll sell every steer on the place before such talent goes begging;" having in mind her hoodwinking of Sandy Joe on the analysis of Dogies (which are motherless calves open to impromptu adoption by any lucky brander), when (Bax smiled as he thought of it) he had spent several hours on the same exhaustive topic only the evening before.

Robbie had flushed first and looked a little nasty, then she had said in a very simple and sisterly fashion:

Just "Hush up," and smiled defiantly thereafter at him during her naïve little deceptions on these simple folk.

And there was nothing stuck up in the girl, white as were her hands, and heaven-tilted as was her chin. Why, she treated old Billy and the rough young bronco busters on a par and with far greater warmth of manner than that young strip from New York in the "make-believe rig," as one puncher expressed it, who owned half the Garnet mine.

ON A CALENDAR (SECONDARILY)

A CROSS a wide endless-seeming plain two young riders were tearing. In this latter day muddle and warp of sex, it may not be unseemly to mention that one of these horsemen was a girl. See! with the un-Arizonian complexion, and the suspicion of gold dust in her hair. The sun had left such a trail in the sky, it is impossible to try and describe it. It would be better to go to Arizona at once, and learn that there can be no exaggeration. As if angels had walked through the West with trumpets, and suddenly, it was so triumphant, there had been a metamorphosis to color of sound. Oh! it was red and golden, marvellous and very blue.

The earth was but stubble and cow trails, silence, this man, and a girl. When they had ridden well from under the hills and faced the solitude before them, her voice broke the stillness. It was like a pretty whip with smarting lashes.

"Are n't you afraid to be on the desert alone with a woman?"

He set his chin firmly. He had much to forgive her. At dinner when Bax had said: "Robbie,

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I am going to stay an hour or so longer, but you must go back to Rel by dusk. Mr. Garnet has offered to see you home," — she'd asked very coolly, with a fetching simplicity to the dishonest little question, "*which* Mr. Garnet was?"

Bax knew it was false, but he rather liked it. He could not look, as Claude did, at it; he was married. To him, in this experience, a woman's humors did not spoil, even affect, her soul.

He only laughed inwardly, tolerantly; and when he, too, rode home that evening alone on the lonely plain, another fuller laugh broke from him. It had been steeped in happy memories, and came out quizzically, as he touched unconscious spurs to his pony.

"She is a great girl," he said aloud, still smiling. The pony carried him joyously. They were of one mind, brute and man. Two free things of nature with but one tame instinct, — that of home. Stirring whimsical memories came to him as he rode on. He said yet again, "There is but one greater."

His friendly plains felt the joy of his mirth. They seemed to roll, to grow into echo, and come back to him from the surrounding hills. The stars crept out and seemed to smile. He tried to think, and became mixed thinking. It seemed Stevenson who had once said for him, "This

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feeling for parts of nature was much one felt for one's wife." Much, not quite it.

All Claude could say to the girl's mocking taunt, was "No," after all.

He had meant to answer it sharply, far differently. He had said to himself that he did not understand her. She was shallow, unmannerly, purposeless. He wanted to tell her how shocked he was; how he had come planning to find the native woman symbolic of all her Western reputation; how he had found her really very nice, very sweet, and rather too backward; how he had found strange qualities in this little stranger that he had never found in the East, where she had come from. Perhaps he had even planned a masterly dissertation on the anomalism, but he could not frame all this when the time came.

"If I had been afraid," he continued, feeling his dignity demanded this, "I should not have come with you." Suddenly he made a flank movement, attacking her vitally. His success ever lay in his simplicity and directness. It was the sympathetic medium of his life, and commanded vaguely, courteously, but imperiously. He adopted this route gently almost before the full hauteur of his former tone was accomplished.

"I think we might be helpful to each other. Will you try to be friends?"

On a Calendar (Secondarily)

"Do you like our sunsets?" she said, almost simultaneously to his desire, that she answer him in cold unmistakable words.

She was riding straighter. She was true, too, only he did not know it. In Chicago truth was not fashionable in their set. Responsive to Claude's appeal was nothing defined or satisfactory. She would not answer him until she knew. It was a certain promise of better things, poor child!

"*Our* sunsets?" repeated Claude. It was a commonplace subject with delicious undertones.

"May n't I enjoy the pronoun also? Which of us stepped off the train first?"

She cast him a fleeting glance with a repressed inclination to it.

"I never noticed sunsets before," she said rather impetuously. "They seemed only a part of the shops and lamps in the city. Perhaps houses hid them."

"Or hills," said Claude.

They were so intense just then, it took them full a moment or so to know he had been guiltless of some great effect in that very mediocre little addition. She was upset by it. Then she started in recklessly again.

"A man drew a calendar," she said. "He was a friend of my sister. His name was Sidney. Do you know him?"

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"No," answered Claude, hardly knowing where she was leading.

"He made scenes on it of Arizona life. We thought it immense — very funny. I think he is a great artist already. Even Bax laughed. Bax, you know, is opposed to liquor. It was of a sunset, the kind we see most of down here, done in flaming red, and a puncher in front of a swing bar door. He was fast asleep, and the flask emptying by his side. It was immense."

"Things like that —" said Claude.

"Like what?" she echoed.

"Are they for women to see?"

She gave a laugh like her cool little voice, only far more reckless; then went on talking. It was barely a pause.

"Another picture was of a man. He was being chased by a woman, who brandished a poker. It is our ideal of connubial bliss here. It was a round-up. You're not much for art, perhaps?"

He began to understand her better, a forgiveness for their differences of temperament being uppermost. They were not like each other. It was wonderful being different. These were progressive stages. He was earnest — appallingly so, too manner-moral, as it were. She was not earnest. It was like a fan, and she was coquetting with him. He was growing clever quickly — this solemn household fellow, Claude.

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He thought her very fascinating. His mind provided a thousand things in answer — all of some sombre color, which it seemed her vivid, unquenchable fancy must despise. So after quite a time, he said :

“ It is not art so much as the subject.”

He could not shake his old self, you see.

“ What subject ? ” Robbie asked.

“ The relations between man and woman.”

She looked interrogative.

“ I hold old-fashioned opinions,” Claude announced (quite a haughtiness in his manner, to be exact).

“ That the man should be brandishing the poker ? It is not original,” Robbie returned.

He stared at her. He did not know what to say ; as they rode farther, he did not mind not being able to speak. She was riding along beside him, breast to breast, and he could see how, if they kept on riding, the gloom would envelop them both as one, and it was sweet to him. Then their horses started on much faster. It stimulated him to speak.

“ I don't think you want to be friends.” This time when he got to the think, her tie blew out and flapped into his face and stayed there, and did not seem to want to blow away.

She tossed her head and replied (there seemed something like surrender in it) :

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"You have no sense of humor. People bore me — unless — after awhile — yet I should like to be friends with you."

She pursed her lips, as if waiting for him to answer. Then she would decide.

"I only had a conscious sense of humor once in my life," Claude answered; "may be that will do? It was when you said to me, 'Who are you?' at Short's. I wondered why unkind fate had left you without a lorgnette!"

"That is not a sense of humor, that is mean," answered the girl, blushing. Yet she did not look really vexed, and, as if glad of the opportunity offered, said very simply:

"I did not know who you were that day. I am afraid we were both taken at a disadvantage. I want you to forgive anything personal I said about your family."

"I think I enjoyed it," Claude answered, "especially what the seminary girls said of me."

"Oh! don't — that is terrible," she cried, getting crimson. "They did not mean a word of it."

"No, I presume not," he returned, quite gravely.

Then unable to carry it on any longer, they laughed.

"We are making wonderful strides," he said, after this outburst. "I think you must not give

On a Calendar (Secondarily)

me up too soon. A little completer association and I'll know when to laugh after all."

She said "All right," quite demurely. Then this came up impulsively :

"You have changed. You do not seem the same to me."

"You have not changed," Claude answered. "At least you are always changing. You are not one person, but ten. How can I express it? May be you can help me out."

"No, I am tired of myself," she returned. "I do not want to!" She brought the whole tide of her convictions back to him again.

"It is you I do not know what to make of. You are greatly changed."

"If you find this humor more simple, why should you care?" asked Claude, rather too intense.

"I do not like this humor better," returned the girl.

He gave it up hopelessly.

"How have I changed? Tell me."

"The other day when we drove into Weffold's — on the stage — had you known I was I, it would have seemed hypocritical."

"Oh, no," emphatically.

"Oh, yes," she argued.

He drew the reins in vexedly. He could not contradict it. He was woefully true, Claude!

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"Well, what of it?"

"Nothing," breathed his companion, "only there is a difference!"

She scrambled out of the subsequent silence far more readily than he. She was unintentionally coquettish this time.

"To-day, when I clinked cups with that man at the table, it was not the *action* you disapproved of, but — but —"

"The *man*," Claude ended for her — decided enough this time.

Her heart beat wild, as they flew over the stubble. It was quite convincing. In Chicago there is a supposition that the heart theory is a myth.

Once he leaned over and touched her bridle in a queer, protective, controlling fashion.

"There is a question I want to ask you," he said.

"On what?" she asked.

"On my having changed," Claude replied.

"Which way do you like better?"

"I will run you a race," she gasped, against the wind, her voice half gone, but her cheeks all aglow, and her eyes shining.

They were nearing home — Weffold's then, — the soul of old Carl's vast estate. They both looked young and very radiant — these two.

"If you catch me before I reach the house, you can — learn —"

On a Calendar (Secondarily)

"Surely," called Claude, as if threatening.

She went off without answering, like the wind. Her little horse tore the ground, riding long and low. A shout went up from some hand in the field at the sight. It was involuntary.

Then Claude put spurs to his little mustang deliberately.

THE DEED OF A FADED DAGUER- REOTYPE

BAX WEFFOLD was used to his married life by this time. It had been a change at first. A woman's eyes see the world on such a different side from men's. He had not known how to look at things before, she said. But he asserted that all men enjoyed the same ignorance until they were married, which pleased her very much, as it sounded complimentary to the entire sex, and no doubt would have caused her to patronize him if he had not been Bax Weffold, instead of an ordinary man, — a Bax whose life had been colorless as a sunless day until his love and marriage. It is a theory with most women that if men do great good it is because of a romance of some kind, however remote. But Bax had been a rude, native pillar long before he met her, save in the *Ideal* (she always concluded, bound to have some place in his good).

He used to say "yes, he knew her at once when they met that evening," which may sound very tame to us old fogies long past such non-

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sense; but it was the bread of his life to Bax. They never coquetted with each other, as even married people will; but were very direct and simple. May be a certain amount of shadow, not gloomy, but merely gentle shadow, had much to do with this.

He loved her so very entirely, yet so very tenderly.

"Oh," she said once to him, after she had heard some noble little story about him, "how could you have cared to serve and help the world so, Bax, before you met me!"

"You see," he said, "there was my mother."

For a long, long time she had not answered; then, when a day or so was passed, she came helplessly to him.

"Bax," she said, "there is something I want you to teach me, which I can't learn by myself. I struggle, and struggle, and it won't come to me. Why, I should not be jealous of your mother, dear!"

In the days after Robbie's ride and that momentous round-up, there were a thousand calls on his moods and advices. He responded to these light-heartedly. Sometimes off to himself, he pulled a long face, perhaps, and indulged in as sober and solitary reflection as any unmarried man; but, when there were pressing questions

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like this to answer, we are all more or less wont to put more vital ones from us.

What did he suppose Claude could have said to Robbie, if Don had heard Robbie say to Claude,—

“You *have*, but I like you either way”?

He did not know. If she had not known what Robbie had said to Claude, she would not have been so curious to know what Claude had said to Robbie, would she? She merely sniffed at this, until she saw Don was involved in it, then she said:

“They rode up just at twilight. In fact, it was not too dark to see that Robbie seemed to be running a race, and I am my sister’s guardian.” (Bax smiled at little stops like this.) “Her tie was untied and was flying, imagine Robbie! and her hat was not on her head at all.” (Now it was—just imagine!) “I think when it gets that far, Bax, I had a right to listen; for just as they reached the gate, he reached over and caught her bridle. She was laughing, but he looked dreadfully in earnest.”

“I think he is rather earnest,” Bax interrupted.

“But,” she persisted, “that certain expression!”

“Oh! don’t,” said Bax, “this is n’t honorable.” She simply swept him from head to foot with a look.

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"Honorable! you ought to know other women."

"Oh! I'm glad I don't," returned Bax.

"You know," he continued, "you are match-making, and I won't abet you in it."

"Marriages are made in Heaven," she brought to bear, indignantly.

"Well, then, I won't abet Heaven," he cried. "I'm not influential enough to try. Rel, Rel, can't you see we'd better leave well-enough alone? My father has seemed bitterer than ever against the Garnets since Claude came."

"You know," she said, a perfect woman, "since he signed our agreement, it is all I can do not to snap my fingers in his face."

Bax did not smile. He loved her faults best of all, but the depths of his heart were unfathomable just then. There was an impending quality of desolation to the weight. He had half a mind to talk it out with her, but when she came back even later, he could not bring that old woeful expression to the superficial happiness in her face.

She had just found out about Robbie's and Claude's first meeting on the stage. She hated Robbie's not having told her. It seemed deceitful. Did he think Robbie hypocritical?

He could not say for certain. Once he might have thought so; but, from his latter experience with women, he thought not.

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“Why?”

“Once he had been engaged to a woman, and in the over-gush of first betrothal, she had given him her diary to read, and since then he had never tried to understand women. In fact, after a man reads an article like this: ‘First meeting: I talked all evening to Lieutenant Carsdell, so Mr. Wef-fold would n’t know how simply magnificent I think him,’ — a fellow is only grateful for getting a wife at all; especially when he remembers how he was feeling that very night.”

Mrs. Bax was very red.

“Another place she was so very miserable over having flirted deliberately with this same Lieutenant that she would have taken carbolic acid if it had not burnt so much.” He looked steadily before him. “I remember the other fellow felt pretty much that way himself that night.”

She put her hands to her face.

“Oh! stop. Did you have a worse opinion of her after?”

“No, only of myself,” Bax answered, quizzically a bit, at which she dropped on her knees beside him, and put both arms around his neck.

“I should have taken carbolic acid if you had n’t married me, Bax, I know it.”

He tried to say the word “Coward,” but she put her hand across his lips.

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Between these times, Bax remembered how thin the cows had shown at the recent round-up. It was a simple fact with immense issues.

He never seemed entirely blameless of the great droughts of his own lifetime. The suffering entangled him pitifully. As of old, he sought to face and unravel the problem. For years and years, his father had been a sort of water king in this frontiersland. He remembered in his mother's lifetime having found this out.

He had been very little, and the country a mere handful to what it was now. She had been a city woman, ignorant of the State or its resources then, and Carl Weffold had not striven to disillusion or enlighten her. She believed him to be powerful, but powerless in these crises of abject famine, until one morning at breakfast, she had leant over and laid something before him. It was an editorial from a town paper near them on himself. It commenced trenchantly, humorously, on those endless fences he had been building lately. "Whether Devil's work in the Devil's land were not territorial improvement after all? Furthermore, what degree of bravery or skill was attained when the shotgun guard, who protected his water rights for him, shot down the only transgressors, — some dying, thirst-maddened old cows?"

There is only one thing sterner than a cruel man. It is a virtuous woman.

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One night, Bax, clinging affrightedly to her skirts, had heard her say these words to his father :

“ I came a beggar to your gates, and I ’m going back. I would rather die than live as your wife has to, — a usurer of the holiest stewardship God has given one of his creatures — great riches in a time like this.”

“ What are you going to do with the boy ? ” old Carl had taunted, before he saw she meant it.

“ I will take him with me,” she said fiercely.

The essence of kindness or cruelty is the capability of childish minds. The long quarrel between his father and his wife, her cold determined Portia face, his taunts, commands, and entreaties were haze soon after to the little child. He supposed, even knew, it had ended as other quarrels had done after.

“ I love you — be mistress — stay ! ”

The child, the boy, the man, Bax remembered only, clearly, so keenly, it blistered still, his part in that little scene and others. It was a scar at last from the growing knowledge that he — son, only child, and heir — was unloved.

It had been sorry and noticeable enough when he was a little, little child, like Don, for instance ; when he had gone to sleep and wakened ; sick or well, glad or lonely, looking into his mother’s eyes. It was bad enough now when the earlier friend was gone, and his own fatherhood opened

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the old sores a thousand times ; but in no time had it ever been worse than when he was in his realer boyhood—in long pants ; in the very dawn of what he was to become. Other fellows at college—he was fourteen or so then—wrote letters home to their fathers in loving familiarity. They asked as idly for money as he might have asked Shorty, say. In return they got jolly answers, through which pride stalked with a capital “P,” and he had never a line save from his mother ! He grew too old to cry. He saw other men slap their sons on the shoulders and walk off with them, arm in arm. He used to brace his little shoulders and to think how good his mother was. When he read or heard about one’s best friend being one’s mother, he was always the first to feel the truth of it. But, when we are fourteen or fifteen, it is sweet to be loved by a man.

He felt that she was suffering remotely, too ; so he never said anything to her, save only once. It was when she chanced to surprise him. It was visitors’ day at school, and his school just then was in Chicago. He was usually very lonely and whistled all day during these joyous affairs. But this day they had a caller for him. As he rushed into the parlor, mad with joy, he saw a woman come toward him. She spoke to him and held out her arms. She probably was crying, as

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women will, on all occasions. But his eyes went over her shoulder searching here and there. He was no hypocrite with her. It was only his coming manhood which wanted his father so very, very much. He thought surely his father would have understood and come.

Big as he was, she held him in her arms, rocking to and fro herself, like one in wretched agony, because his suffering was her own — tenfold. She chattered, mumbling, heartsick comfort to him, meanwhile.

“O mother! why does father hate me?”

(This, you know, is the rod God uses.)

“Hush, hush, my darling. There is your Father in Heaven!” To herself she said, over and over, only, “I think my heart will break.”

But that was ages and ages ago, and since then this lonely boy had grown and been blessed beyond calculation; and to one little solemn scrap of a cow-boy, he, a Bax, long man, was giving all the pent and yearning affection he had once asked for himself.

The country fell into these states of privation periodically. It was a resurrection of all his past to Bax.

The first drought after his mother's death had demonstrated his new position in the rule very convincingly. His conscience was no longer

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salved by her power at the ranch. He had not known how she had fed the dove of peace from her very casement, until shortly after she died. There had been bitter words. After the scene Shorty described on the stage, he had gone forth,—his wife, his child, his sense of right, his faith in himself, and his fearlessness of the world.

He came back two years or more after. He was then at the physical pass, when dying or very old people say this or that thing does n't count. He said this of pride, of independence, to the last trace of his old, strong self. At his final submission to what was really Fate, but which the world called his father, he had sat before a cheerless hearth, sick unto death almost, resisting, until a woman's arms had gone around his neck, and her face looked into his face, and she had said:

"You have to go back, Bax Weffold; if you love me, go! Let's go together." She was too heart-broken to say the real cause to him. She could only add irrelevant scraps like this: "Think of the fine air of the mornings and the beautiful landscapes at night."

He felt as if he were expected to make a demurrer, one of his old stock, but he reached in vain for the old violence of wrong and hatred. So, not understanding the change, nor yet caring

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to deceive her as to their being none, he leaned back and said very simply :

“ After all, it does n’t matter, Rel.”

She never expected him to live until they got there. But when they reached the interminable desert, beyond Yuma, at last, she looked up once to say :

“ Are n’t you just cooked, Bax ? ” to find that he was looking out of the windows, across the sandy plains and the homely cactus, with such a famished gladness of welcome in his eyes that she sank back silent. It turned out that his spirit was soothed by the sight ; for later he lay very quiet, his face and its little care furrows seeming more tranquil than for many months.

The reason I tell you all this is to get to the Major’s agreement. Bax did not know much about his own physical condition just then ; save to feel that he was unable to earn his family a living, and through no fault of his. For the bitterness over losing his power to support them had been very brief and sad. First, he had had to give up his better place because mind and body and soul all went under ; and when he got up again, he was cut out by some other fellow. Then, he had taken anything — hard work on the very streets, if you will, and they had done fairly well, he and Rel, till one morning, when he

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went to cross the threshold, he had simply fallen before he had ever passed it.

He never realized that he was near dying. He was only aware that he did not feel as he used to — like his old self, as it were. In fact, Rel's being the same woman did much to keep his own identity clear.

They came slowly into Weffold's. Nobody met them at Short's or Hope. Nobody stood at the gate in welcome. The doors beyond it were open, it was true, but bare. Carl's son, the wife, and little grandson waited in the team outside, while Shorty unhitched the gate they were to drive through. They rode in, got out, without a word or look; save when Bax entered the porch with his silent little family, he stooped and kissed each member of it, as if in welcome. But no one spoke to him.

The Major came out slowly. His glasses were on his nose, but he did not look through them. He still held the latest San Francisco paper in his hand.

"Wal, Bax'n," he drawled, "so you've come."

Mrs. Bax and her boy went to the old room at Bax's intimation. Once there, she did not seek to restrain her outraged sense of fitness.

"He never even noticed Don," she cried again and again, as if it were a little knife made to stab herself with.

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Meanwhile, Bax and his father, separated two years and but just met, faced each other outside. Neither seemed to feel an inclination to sit down while continuing the conversation.

"Wal," the old man said, "what air you thinking?"

"That there are better ways of getting into your grave than stepping into it," answered his son, not smiling.

Then he continued almost feverishly :

"What terms shall we strike, father?"

The old man's smile broke into a bitter chuckle.

"Terms? If I wanted, I could strike 'em with a likelier looking partner than you."

"Perhaps," said Bax simply.

He looked at the old man longer than there was any need for. He tried to frame fit strength for the fierce storm of vituperation deep down in his soul, but he could not manage it. He went toward the door with all the hideous hate in his eye of a man whose hands were longing to seize some throat.

And then he was stopped.

"Bax 'n," his father called. He turned, the cords still swollen; the sick, crushed, feeble wrath still in his feverish eyes.

"What terms do you want to make?" the Major asked.

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(It was moreover asked gently.)

"I came down to get work," blurted Bax. "No one else would give it to me. I think I'm dying; but you are my father. You ought not to bar a man out for that. Thirty dollars a month and our board."

The Major said nothing for a minute or so. Then he asked :

"Do you want it in black and white?"

"Yes," Bax answered.

They turned to the desk together. It was an old-fashioned piece of furniture, always unfastened, but very bare, very neat; as if the property of some one at an age beyond accumulating rubbish.

"As father and son?" asked the Major.

"As master and man," answered Bax.

The desk had stood there by the side of the house—in this open room (and itself quite open) for as long as Bax could remember. The outer door was never locked. Different papers had lain for years and years in the little pigeon-holes and compartments, yet no one ever thought of disturbing them. On the top of this desk, and for as long as it had stood there, there had lain a daguerreotype of the old-fashioned order, encased. It was of Mrs. Weffold.

Yet had desk and portrait both been in an iron safe, they could not have been more protected,—

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so austere and exempt were the Major's possessions.

Bax stood silently beside his father. The old man's eyes fell first upon the daguerreotype. As well as if it had sprung wide open of a sudden, he may have seen the hidden face, perhaps, the wide pure strange eyes which had never known fear of him or other man in them; the sensitive rounded chin, so like her son's, the whole powerful yet delicate spirituality, of which he had ever been in awe. It may have been influenced by this, or it may not have been, but Johann Carl Weffold felt in a certain pigeon-hole. He extracted a bundle of papers, neatly bound together by a cord. It seemed to Bax his hands trembled.

"I want you to share these with me. They air your mother's papers," he said. "I should rather you would n't read them all until — till after I am dead. That is, the majority of them." With his own fingers, he separated one of these. It was the topmost. He spread it wide from its long creases with an oldish methodical touch.

"It won't do any harm fer you to read this," he said to Bax.

Bax's hand shook as he reached for it. It was in a cramped, Germanic, unfamiliar hand. It read:

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“I, Johann Carl Weffold, do hereby deed to my wife, Louise, a one-half interest in the profits and control of the Range known as Weffold, share and share alike, until death.”

It was almost as pitiable to Bax as a tale. He felt a sick longing to see his mother again, to lend his yearning manhood to her support. He had known but the gentlest side of her. In the paper Johann Carl held out to him now was a double story.

He did not know which was more tragic, — the sickening hold of her pride that she had kept at every expense, or the mightiness of his father's love.

He handed the paper back in silence.

Old Weffold dipped the pen into some ink. He set his hand firm on the yellowed paper after the fashion of old men. As the letters formed beneath it, Bax found himself under a spell. He thought of Don as he did so — of the time when he, grown old, stiff, paralytic of limb, might —

God! what love at the thought! what prayers for the time when he would not be near him, dear little young son, to instruct, save, uplift!

Something caught in his throat — lingered — was still there, when he saw that codicil of the Major's.

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“And to our issue, forever—in the name of God—Amen—Johann Carl Weffold,”

and the later date.

Even to Bax, college-bred, and foster son of soulless cities, there was no legal absurdity to that. It was almost barbaric in its simplicity, its solemn intenseness. He had been used to it. It was a breath from the time before men bound their honor by seals and oaths. He was used to the name of God without believing in it. Detached from any conventional phrasing, it meant “On honor,” nothing more or less. In a land like this where the gun is still the blind goddess—why, the word of men is good enough. It holds often enough, and if it does not, why, you are a self-elected judge, and often there is no jury.

He staggered into Rel that day. He remembered that. She was sitting on the bed and crying, doing her handkerchief up into a damp little ball to mop her face and undoing it during intermissions. He recognized the mood with wonderful humorous yearning indulgence. He took her into his arms. He realized her position to him—how angelic her former strength, how penetrating this lovable weakness. He said: “I was cold, cold to my

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father. He has been more than generous to me. Laurel, tell me, have you ever thought it? Have I erred all through?"

While she, woman-like (though I blush for it), said nothing relevant. She just lay against him and sobbed and sobbed. He used jocosely to say that he had to gain strength from that moment, — so philosophic-wise did she look.

"That last night in the Hyde Street back-r-room, Baxie, w-when we pawned my little l-locket, I k-knew something good would turn up."

Part of Carl Weffold's issue sat in the empty fireplace while this was going on; it seemed just made to fit him. The soot had a novel charm.

While as for old Carl himself, he watched Bax Weffold stagger, miserable, dazed, branded as her own of Heaven, through the door. Then he smiled. It was not the smile of a philanthropist. It told, yet not all — nor of entire kindness. His eyes roamed here and there, to the bundle of papers, laid back just as they were before, as if that one little clause were only a freak of fancy. His gaze travelled back — back. He could not detain it. Something drew and drew it. His eyes grew fixed and fearful. For one moment, the frantic terror of ghosts seemed in them.

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Then he walked out into the air and left his conscience. He walked — it would soon be over. It could not pursue him. It was no one — nothing, old-fashioned, unbeautiful, inanimate.

Merely a little shabby, faded daguerreotype.

PART SECOND

ON UNPRACTISED "SCIENCE"

A BIG summer tent was constituting ladies' parlor at Weffold's. It lay east of the burning bricks, which cooled a little as the sun slanted westward. But the sun had not slanted readily. It had seemed to mount with the superb insolence of its power and hold the throne of the sky for long; very long, thought the tired laborers, who mopped their discolored faces, their toil-marked brows.

Four ladies stood inside this white little building, saying good-bye.

One was young Mrs. Weffold's sister, the girl who had come there the August before, and who belonged in Chicago.

"You really should not go so soon," she exclaimed, yet moving toward the door, as she said this.

Young Mrs. Weffold repeated: "Do spend the afternoon with us," hospitably. But the short, stout one, who was watching Miss Laurence, suddenly decided that they had better not.

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Her name was Blenshaw. She wore ankle skirts, and believed in woman suffrage.

"You are quite brave to believe in woman suffrage way down here," Robbie had said. "It is so warm, don't you know?"

The lady had argued all the morning forcibly with her. She said it was bigotry in Miss Laurence of an unusual, almost unrecognizable order.

"Like phases of the grippe," Robbie said, helping her out suavely.

"Yes!" the woman had answered; "principle was not a question of zone or temperament — would n't Miss Laurence see it? — but of right."

She did not know what to make of Miss Laurence. She liked Mrs. Weffold. She thought Mrs. Weffold would have been a very nice woman if she were not a fool over that very mediocre child.

Mrs. Weffold, in turn, used to say often, "No one is worth much who does not like children." It was an unalterable decision, so her opinion repelled compromise.

The little thin, nervous lady, whose husband was merely a trammer in the mine, had no such violence of energy either for or against in her mind. As she said good-bye to the ladies, she remarked:

"It seems almost improbable we stayed to

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lunch. We only intended spending an hour or so. We enjoyed the strawberries. It is almost impossible to get such luxuries in town. Strawberries is very pleasant on a warm day, aren't they?"

Robbie looked weary.

"Yes," she answered, "watermelons is the only thing pleasanter."

Mrs. Bax flushed a little. Mrs. Blenshaw held out her hand to the girl.

"Miss Laurence, you will try and like the country better now, won't you?" she asked. "As I have been trying to tell you, you do not really dislike it. You imagine you do. Now, you must get oblivious to this feeling. That is real Christianity."

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Blenshaw. I am quite a willing disciple, I am sure. I shall become oblivious very shortly, I keep telling my sister. I shall die of Arizona. Is death real Christianity, too? Now that is the new point, is it not?"

She went to the gate with them herself, and stood on the path inside it, watching them recede up the road. Their country boots were dust-covered, white, thick; their skirts, rough material and common; their shirt waists, pitiable, she said. She called things strong names those days.

Mrs. Blenshaw carried a parasol, large and

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uncouth, like an umbrella. She held it over the other little lady as they walked.

Miss Laurence smiled to herself, as she gazed. Then she flitted about the path a bit, as if temporizing. She examined a stunted fruit-tree near, trying to wonder if its meagre crop were late peaches or almonds. She spent another minute or so trying to open a tightly closed bud of a little rose beside her.

Then, with something tangible in view, closed the flapping little gate at last, which Mrs. Blenshaw had left half open. Afterward she went back to the tent. It was decked with some worthless woman's fixings, which yet gave the necessary feminine atmosphere, so to speak. A cloud of summer goods lay around young Mrs. Weffold. She was working on it.

Robbie stood a second or so above her.

"I know that they thought that was my trousseau," she remarked flippantly, to start with. "Everybody thinks of a trousseau first of all."

Mrs. Bax raised a darkened, stormy face.

"You sha'n't insult my friends," she cried. "You are unbearable, lately. You have no respect for anything. It is wicked."

"I don't know any better," the girl returned, listening, but her expression not changing from sheer graceful indifference.

"You do know better," Mrs. Bax cried.

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"You said that on purpose. It is the grossest inhospitality."

"Once," the girl returned in the same voice, but with unimpeached powers of repartee, as usual, "a lady invited a country woman to call upon her. Seeing the country woman make lemonade out of her finger-bowl water, the lady made lemonade out of hers also, and drank it. I have always wondered if it agreed with her, after dinner."

"I won't waste words on you," Mrs. Bax said, white with anger. "You are very sinful, I say."

Robbie sat down in a rocker at this.

"I think that is bigotry of an unusual, almost an unrecognizable order," she commenced gravely, with such a faint Blenshaw ring it was delicious mimicry. "Morals are not a question of manners. I may be inhospitable, abominable, ill-bred, and yet be perfectly moral."

She leaned back and covered her face all at once with a Mental Science pamphlet, that Mrs. Blenshaw had insisted on placing in her hand as she left. Mrs. Bax could not see her face after that. Her chin was tilted and perfectly motionless, so as to keep the paper in position.

Presently she said, "I wish my name were St. Laurence."

"— Why?" answering herself.

"So it would sound better in the Chicago

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papers, when they pick up the Arizona 'Sun-beam' and see the notice of my death, with little additions such as these: 'Chicago, San Francisco papers please copy. New York Journal please note,' etc., etc. Aren't you laughing yet?"

"I don't think I shall ever laugh at you again," Mrs. Bax returned.

"Oh! yes, you will," the girl exclaimed gayly, jumping up — her natural self. "I am awfully sorry."

"How can you?" Mrs. Bax's voice was forgiving, but she did not countenance it at once.

The girl looked rueful. "I don't think I am so very bad," she said; "being dull I like to be entertained."

Then she took up a piece of work. It was cream, like her own skin, and the nimble little hands took hold of it deftly.

"I presume people will think me stuck up," she said, "having a new dress for the party. Yet the old one was washed into a veritable rag before I abandoned it to Sal's mercy. I don't know what kind of material the town women use, but it's a regular country idea. Some tawdry, unwashable stuff, that gets dowdy the first time they wear it. Anything to wear a new dress each party.

"They always hate the people who try art on rags, à la Cinderella's comforting god-mamma."

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She sighed.

As their two heads bent over the sewing, her voice kept going steadily, in a little overflowing way that she had of talking. It was musical only periodically; at other times, flat and rather weary; and occasionally, hard.

"If I had stayed in Chicago last year, I would have seen some of the country also; where Elsie and her mother most care to go is on a farm in Ohio. We rest there absolutely one whole month. It is flat, fertile. A river runs through it, shaded by cool, drooping trees; everything is idyllic, like Browning's verses about the country in Saul. I was reading it this morning." She reached over, picked up a book, and let her eyes fall on a page of it, and then, with one sweeping little gesture, threw it far out of the tent.

Mrs. Bax said nothing.

"Browning is a fool, you know. Imagine having written this nonsense for us to read here!" She commenced reciting from

"And I first played the tune all our sheep know."

Her voice was singularly sweet then. When she came to

"Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed," she said:

"There is no such place on earth of late," and there was such a homesick strain in the little

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voice which said it, that Mrs. Bax knew the yearning eyes looking out of her desolate little tent door held simple, solemn, unanalyzed tears.

"Do you want to go home, Rob?" she asked.

"Some time, not just this minute," recovering flimsily.

"I am going on with my narrative. Then we would have come home in October, say. There would be lots of dressmaking, oceans of invitations, driving through the rain at night, breathing the perfect clear air of the city after the clamor of the day was ended, and the whole country was having its dear, provokingly steady bath.

"Christmas — loads of gifts to give and receive — h-e-re!" she laughed.

"No end of parties. May be I should have become engaged to some college boy. I was quite the biggest favorite of us all with the set. They were so callow, they thought my sinfulness [here she curtsied], wit.

"Then all Chicago would have said, 'How lucky! that envious little Laurence thing capturing So-and-So's millions. But it always takes a smart man to have a fool for a son.' The older men liked Elsie. There was nothing to disprove about her."

"I am sure they liked you, too."

"They did n't. I can always tell. Well, gayety would have continued until Lent com-

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menced. Lent let us out of that, except giving our dearest friends afternoon-tea without cream or sugar. For a month each season I used to embroider an altar cloth for a church Elsie patronized a bit. It was tedious slavery. If they had not been so kind to me, I should have torn it every season into shreds.

"Just this time," ended Miss Laurence, springing to her feet and going to the tent door, "we would be making our country gowns again — long, easy, flimsy, darling *négligées*, Laurel. Imagine, pale, Acadian, greenish ! to wear while we watched clean, well-fed Bonheur cows standing in — water —" She blurted out her mirth this time between the words, as if Mrs. Bax could n't grasp such a pastoral picture — "up to their knees, — just think !"

The ever-present echoes carried her laughter back, until it seemed that she and the country were mocking each other fiendishly.

Mrs. Bax ran a seam attentively. She tried to give all her thoughts to it.

Then the high, thin, taunting little voice had started in again.

"So this is your spring — not a spear of grass on plain or hilltop, a sun gone perfectly mad overhead, playing the wrong rôle for every season, swelling bricks which are scorching even in May to the touch."

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She reached one hand out from where she stood. The tips of four white, scornful little fingers showed against the red adobe just one instant or so, then dropped. "Cattle, horses, men, mad for water. Is there never a time when it will cease?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Rel, "and grow better."

She, no one better, knew the limit of such a worked-up passion as this of Robbie's was now, and she decided to stop it, if she could.

"Grow better! Oh, what a travesty," cried the girl. "Why — why — do people live here?"

"There are men for all purposes," the older woman replied. "Unless men had founded, others could not have built. Unless men had discovered, others later could not have civilized. Unless blood had been spilt by some for its entrance, peace would not be enthroned in our land; say what people will of it."

"Oh!" the girl answered to all of this, as if the argument were too large to enter.

"Do men ever succeed here?" she asked her sister next.

"You know they do," Mrs. Bax replied. "The whole condition improves year after year, so Bax tells me. These water famines are all we have to fight now. The Apaches menace progress no longer. Some day, when there is enough capital, immense irrigation schemes will

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be conceived, consummated ; men will embrace the possibilities time has produced for them ; and our cattle will see their millennium."

Her own eyes softened almost divinely now, because it was over some lowly things the humaneness was hovering.

Robbie said nothing this time in answer. She stood against the post at the door, clad in light — slim, graceful, dainty. She would say no more about it aloud. Her feelings choked her. "It was not airing an affectation of civilization," she was saying to herself, "to confess to this strangling over the yearly failure of all resurrection."

The cattle were too weak for the giant reproduction which makes stock-raising countries so prosperous from time to time. The little, stumbling, doomed calves which survived the first throes of existence, lay peacefully enough shortly after, hollow, never-filled-out little shapes, rebuking Mother Nature.

"Robbie!"

"Well?"

"Are you crying?"

"No!"

"Laughing?"

"No, I say."

"What are you doing then?"

"Simply being assimilated, as you were."

MASTER?

WHEN Mrs. Blenshaw's timid little companion had said to the Weffold ladies, "My husband says Mr. Garnet has set men to digging a well for the mine," there were several things connected with her statement which she did not know.

Mr. Garnet's attempt was apt to be very futile, merely a hopeful little effort of his own to reach a spring some old countryman had told him ought to be near the foot of the hill, due west of the great yield.

"Years ago, there had been a natural stream of water, when the Weffold Valley was being settled up. Old Carl's d'minion could not tech on this." The young superintendent stood over the spot one day with the weather-warped old frontiersman in conference. The latter was spitting huge, dripping chunks of ungenteel tobacco right and left. After pointing to the spot which he fancied remembrance dictated as a good place to dig, he regarded it as insufficient, so he made a brown discolored circle about it, which the young master tried to look at leniently, as it might come to mean a great deal to him.

Master ?

It would not only insure immense financial profit, relieving the mine of the exorbitant taxation, which subjection to old Weffold's rates entailed, but it would make happier conditions for the people. They bought drinking water by the barrel now and, previous to this past year, had done their little washing with the old refuse water from the mine. The Chinaman on Weffold's own place, in fact, had irrigated with this also.

Now with the country parched, unfed for a year as it was, the dull, red stream from the hill was no longer a useful element to the landscape.

The ditches had long become dry, rather deeper little paths than usual now, with a thin cake of mud still on them. Water would not remain in them. It either sunk into the thirsty earth, or did not resist evaporation ; so, when Simmons saw this had come to pass, he ordered it turned back time and again into the tanks, that they might re-use it.

Claude said, "Very well."

Now he was forced to do it, but previously his ideas of economy had not been subject to Simmons, who was bookkeeper and manager of the force.

Simmons thought Claude would have been well enough winning a boat race at Harvard, but he was not the right man for business. Not at all. Simmons called it being "too damned universal."

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Mrs. Simmons did not understand the phrase, but imagined he meant not stylish, or select enough, for a rich man.

He said that if the people wanted water to wash in, let them buy it like civilized human beings, or go dirty. It was not as if there were no alternative. Claude said twenty cents a barrel in this sort of weather meant going dirty; and, for his part, money they had made in the place was n't going to be padlocked from it, every way one turned.

He never refused any reasonable petition on his mercy as steward of Dick's money or that of the others. Once or twice, when Simmons turned a man off for drinking, he put him back again, after a brief period of Mrs. Fitzsimmons's reflections and his own.

"You'll have to let up," Simmons had cried once, losing his well-guarded temper, and hammering the desk a blow that nearly split it into pieces. He was afraid for his own place a moment later, having never gauged the young superintendent's disposition in that line; but was resolved to see it through:

"I won't have my authority thwarted, belittled, before that mob of ignorant laborers."

"I don't think I thought of you at all, Simmons," Claude said, when the outburst was over. "I owe you an apology."

Master ?

"It was not paying you much of a compliment, dear," Mrs. Simmons had said when she heard it, "choosing between you and a common person like that, and considering him. It was certainly not illustrative of his refinement."

"That is the most confounded part," blurted out her outraged lord and master, "not working for a gentleman."

He thought it was an obsolete, coarse-grained, close-to-the-earth Dutch ancestor in young Claude cropping out.

These little incidents, trivial as one may think them, were rifts within the lute ; Simmons's jealousy of Claude's being above him, and the idle-tongued trammer, who had told his wife about the well.

She did not know that it was a secret. No one of the listening ladies did. Miss Laurence, the young lady, had taken more interest than any one else in it, if the truth be told.

She had said: "When they are digging a well, would n't you think the poor dear men who did n't die of suffocation, would die of fright?"

That was all.

But, not ten feet from her, the Major had heard every word which was said. The worst of having persons like the Major around, is that we get to disregard them as wholly human after a while.

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They become more like the great social evils we are cognizant of existing, but powerless to remove, so it is better not to heed them.

It was the most unforgivable of the commissions against him.

On a day like this, he often sat for hours at a time behind the vines on the porch already mentioned. This was not far from the door of Mrs. Bax's little summer tent. He could hear the noise of her machine constantly, as if he had but to look up and conjure a picture. Other men might have liked it.

The very hum was damning to his every nerve and impulse after a while ; he hated her so entirely. He had no cause individually, perhaps, for so doing, except she was a part of his son's success, poor as this was in a worldly measure.

As for Mrs. Bax, she even knew he was there. Passing in and out, she saw him. She imagined that he was not reading all the time, but she never imagined he was listening — or that he was interested in them enough to listen.

When the trammer's little wife let fall her one independent little sentence, he leaned nearer the vine-clad wire which separated them from him. He heard more, — the conversation in which Miss Laurence was so wearied a listener. There was no real romantic interest to her in Mr. Garnet's digging for a well : " boring " was the word

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the trammer had used, but it had become perverted.

Yet when old Weffold straightened up again, he was smiling inscrutably. He often smiled so to himself, when he saw some way to prove his power, some one else's powerlessness. It meant "I will teach them," generally.

He took a greater interest in the conversation from then on. He heard the strangers go. After, when Robbie leaned against the tent-post, becoming "assimilated," he saw her closely, distinctly. He saw the neatly clothed, drooping, girlish form, with its lively personality deadened, drawn from her for the time; the pretty, speechless face downcast, as if she were awaiting some summons: he watched her curiously. She became like some one to him. He did not try to formulate the resemblance; but it was like his wife. He was half afraid of Robbie at times.

Occasions such as this fanned the slumbering fires within him. The progress of the world without him, even this remote effort which might yet defy his position in the country, the usurping of the public interest by these all-powerful New York rivals,—was more than he could bear long. Some day they would not need him. They would be independent powers, snapping their loosed fingers in his face. He would "teach them" beforehand, he said.

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There was no good or loving woman to draw him from these bitternesses. It was his own fault, in a measure. He had blocked every path of human affection between him and the world. He was working out his life for himself, without God, the fear or faith of hope, the nobility of love. He had had one brief season of fierce animal joy, then his wife's body lay without its soul. He had buried the body, and she was no more. If there were a God, he blamed God for it. If there were no God, it was less bitter, easier to bear, merely the way of all flesh.

Sitting there that afternoon, he reviewed his own life, in a way he had of doing. Nothing vivid, of strong, enduring nature came out, consoling him over the chasm Death lets yearn here and there through our days. Everything was lifeless, — a woman he owned but could not understand; a pile of riches; a little bit of a fair-haired child staring at him across his own groaning table. The face may have changed from time to time, but the great, solemn, wondering eyes were changeless. Bax Weffold owned them now.

He stood up, straightening his limbs. There were times when his age lay in them — heavy, remindful, numb; then he went out across the yard slowly. He saw his little grandson playing by the pond. He saw how he broke the very

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back of the child's content. He decided to speak to him. He said harshly :

" Well, young man, what d' you think ? "

The child had his inseparable friend, the elephant, beside him. His head drooped. He did not answer ; but, as the old man turned off sharply, mumbled terror-stricken little words, tried to reach him.

He could not love his grandfather ; but, with all the pathos attached to many cases of self-protection, he had made up his mind that the elephant did. It seemed to insure him ; so, after sighing over his return to extreme isolation, the little fellow commenced playing again.

But the old man walked on, over his possessions.

The next morning Claude took hold of his correspondence busily. He felt as if he could accomplish something ; he was even humming a favorite air from one of the old operas. Suddenly he stopped short and faced a cramped, quaint, unusual hand adorning a town envelope. Without really saying it was from Carl Weffold, he recognized the handwriting as one he had seen on some original incorporation papers Dick had left in his charge.

It was almost impossible to mistake it — a conservative, contemplative, accruing hand, with

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plenty of German blood, of however long ago, in it.

He opened it curiously.

It imparted the information, that the contract between Hope and Weffolds for water expired the first of the month before them and would not be renewed.

That was all.

Claude saw nothing objectionable in it except the ill will. That was barely tangible, but turned it from a polite communication into an almost fiendish plot to make their poor Dick's rich find a paralyzed power. He did not read doom, but endless reductions from it financially.

During the last months, money, success, and power had become conspicuously dear. This came flashing through him for the first time.

Then, with a quick, authoritative gesture, he touched a bell above his desk. It was the first time he had ever done so, and it went ringing through the shops beyond him, almost startlingly.

A foreman hurried from them to him. He was standing, waiting to give the order. His face was set a trifle, and rather pale.

"Let more men be put to boring on the well below us, please. Work must be constant on it. I am sure they will be successful after a while."

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When the man went out, he winked publicly at one of his companions:

"Want to warm your hands, lightnin'-like," he joshed drolly, "jus' go put 'em on the Boss' office. Something must be a-doing, Jack the Giant Killer has awoked at last."

A DREAMER AND SOME DREAMS

AFTER a little solitary reflection, he resolved to mention it to no one, not even Simmons, who perhaps had a right to know. He fought desperately with his own conception of what was right. He was more than half in love with Robbie. He had no authority or desire to visit her relative's decision on her, to allow an old man like Carl Weffold to destroy what seemed like a fair chance at great joy in his life.

On the other hand, the repugnance to any friendliness between them was almost intolerable. So he concluded to go at night-time, when the possibility of meeting would be removed, but the whole principle of this grew wrong to him; so he went down as usual in daylight, and half-way, ran across the Major, in his light little buggy, riding toward the town.

He touched his hat as usual, and then held up his hand, signifying he would like the old man to stop.

The light was magnificent about them; yellow as the gifts of old Mother Earth to her lucky children.

A Dreamer and Some Dreams

Claude put his hand on the buck-board.

"Major," he exclaimed boyishly, yet with a simple uncultivated directness, "what was the real meaning of your message this morning?"

"Thet I am going to wean the country," the old man returned, smiling. "Hereafter Carl Weffold's interest will more 'n occupy my time."

Claude went off down the road to Weffold's. He smothered hot, hasty, unnatural words, such as the miners indulged in freely. He separated his business and social self after a hard little struggle. He tried not to think of the Major. He was going to see the woman he loved.

Claude resolved two things later.

One was to work steadily on the well he had located beneath them. The other was to watch Bax Weffold more closely those days. He had reason to believe the men were not so well satisfied with Bax Weffold as formerly. He had heard one say one day in ear-shot of him:

"Bax Weffold is a dreamer."

And the other answer:

"As well call him by the other name at once."

"What is it?"

"A fool."

He even imagined Bax was shielding his father behind his own former popularity those days.

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He wished he, himself, were older, worthier, to be Bax's friend.

But there was something unintelligible between them that spring. Afterwards, he knew it was sorrow, but then he called it a different tongue, as if he had presumed to interpret voices of the field :

God's man of the field Bax was.

But to tell Bax's story, we must go back a bit in his history — to the winter before. It was one of the old, unyielding, tormenting seasons, which opened every sore in his life, when the ground lay blistered ; when cattle died ; when day after day, they were to toil and yet receive not. With spring, great sand storms swept the very face of creation, tauntingly.

Yet, in this very barrenness, in all the unconquerable desolation of nature, Bax's long dream grew more real to him like a sterile field about to break and bear at last. Against every impulse of physical determination, he toiled early and late in the field. Mornings you could see him riding far off — one with no living being — his head raised, his chest filled, his whole gaunt, lofty figure gaining a passion from the very needs of the coming day.

So a lover might woo all nature ; now bending low in coaxing whispers, now calling to her masterfully.

But it was all of no avail.

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Seeing it was no use hoping, he went to work doggedly. He had never felt so before; even in his courtship. The labor was glorified for the time. He did not know what it was at first, a sort of spiritual golden dawn by which all life became more lofty.

In reality, life was approaching its climax, and his Sangreal yet unwon.

There were moments when even his wife seemed to intrude on some heart-work he cherished. Presently, his health wore beneath it, like a rock worn smooth by the sea. Sometimes a desire possessed him like the little sobbing spirit of a child. He called it weakness, gradually a little child's sorry weakness, never cured, because the little thing he had once been was no one different, only the former little creature lost in him, grown.

He wanted to make his father love him. He had wanted his father's love all his life, now if only to carry into that camp beyond him, to prove himself before great judges a conqueror on earth. (All men are dreamers, or stalwart punchers; but this was both dream and folly, save as eternity may judge it.) So the unfriendly faces of men were turned for the first time toward him, yet in vain. Rel said more than once, "You are not listening. Of what are you thinking, Bax?" but he did not heed her. The love he

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bore her, received from his child, had made all the stronger a yearning within him to embrace all creation as his friend.

A good doctor would have said, "Be careful."

When the dream received its first awakening jar, he broke without being able to suffer. It was then springtime, an afternoon when Robbie had heard tentative, rambling rumors from Claude about the country.

Bax was coming up from the lower fields near nightfall. Not a laborer had slaved through the famine harder than he. Thanks to his unswerving labor, there was no sign about the Major's acres, save of prosperity. He deserved his "well done," poor Bax.

He walked on, stumbling now and again, as he traversed the irregular mounds and ditches which marked Lon's irrigation scheme. Presently, he saw the Mongolian before him, bending over a row of stunted vegetation. He looked a sullen creature—a rebellion of trampled clay to nature. Yet he had been a kind, smiling, civil fellow enough in other days.

Bax called: "Lon, how're you a-making it?"

He was in a mood to awaken, to understand that night. He observed the Chinaman did not stir. For a second, he could not believe it. Then the cords swelled out, and he was very angry. It swept through him like a storm. He stood until

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it was over. Then he felt more able to control the situation through himself. He was still trembling, but he did not do much as you or I would have done. He was of different mould. He had much of the hopelessness of his fatherland in him, with great veins of lovable forbearance. Men absorb such qualities from their mother's milk. It is not entirely individual, second nature rather.

He knew the Chinaman had heard and repelled him, but he was no civilized gentleman, only a country-bred fellow, used to natural equality, so he did not resist a desire to kick the mongrel into submission again. In fact, he had no such desire.

He had learned in his country training to give all men an equal chance; so he turned on his heel sharply and crossed that part of the field between them and, by his very presence, made the Chinaman look up.

"Lon," he asked, "did you hear me?"

The fellow edged off a little, as if he were afraid of something. He still had a stooping, sullen look to his form, but presently said, looking up furtively at his questioner:

"Yes, Meesa Bax."

The American walked off. He wore great, rough country shoes, and they dug into the hard dry earth as he walked. He barely noticed. Once, as he neared the inner gate, a dog leaped

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from the shadow somewhere and stretched heavy paws the whole length of him, barking joyously the while.

Then, as Bax went on in silence, the sense of smell brought his farm-yards to him keenly, like a whiff from his boyhood. By it he placed his ducks over here, huddled by the wind-mill drippings. They were silent also, unusually so. There stood the hen-houses he had helped to build, the corrals, the little hay-sheds upon which the turkeys went to roost at night, making grotesque silhouettes at times. He heard the restless movement of his few home horses. He went on beyond them. He tried not to pity himself, rather to feel brave and hopeful.

Just then, at the fence which he had to pass, a figure seemed to rise before him. It was Robbie, he knew.

She did not speak but laid her hand on his shoulder, almost affectionately for her.

"I had something to say to you," she said, "so I came out when I heard Nero bark. I don't think Nero is a considerate name. Fancy calling a child Judas."

It was one of her own irrepressible side-tracks. He said:

"You know I have never been superstitious."

"But this does not involve superstition," she replied. "You are absent-minded."

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"Moral superstition, then," he returned, without much argumentative enthusiasm to it.

They leaned, both together, almost side by side, on the corral fence. Her words were vital when they were uttered :

"Do you know some one is making money out of the drought?"

"Making money out of the drought?" he repeated, word for word, as if they were new things to him.

"Yes, Lon's rates have been raised enormously," she observed.

She stood up, on her tiptoes he felt, and tried to peek over the fence before her, as if determined not to say any more.

He felt her unmentioned hate of his father stronger than if it were uttered, may be. A long shuddering motion swept over his body once. He seemed barely conscious of it. His dream was over, but there was nothing left him save to wait the crisis; for the tide had gotten mighty while he slept. Thus, these many forces approached July with the rest.

AN INTERLUDE ON MATHEMATICS

BETWEEN whiles Claude's and Robbie's love story progressed prettily.

There were days when they found life an intoxicating dream. The mystery itself, rides, meals, men, were a wonderful part of the delusion. Again, perhaps, she would sit with a hundred worlds between them, deteriorating, as he watched her, from a perfect yet companionable Venus into a stiff, conventional, little girl-woman, situated behind a thousand ridiculous defences.

Thus Claude was like all heroes. He did not understand a woman's humors all at once, and so proved his one vulnerable spot, like Achilles. On such occasions, he called her in his heart a coquette, and went up-town later, swearing to call on some native belle instead. And great would be his wrath that evening, and cynical the reveries he indulged in, under the far-off, romantic, glorious stars. This is true, and I leave you all to verify it. When a man has never been in love before, there is only one thing more exquisite than the torment. It is the joy.

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May be he would call on some native belle (here is an injustice and to the native belle this time), and then go to tell Robbie of it, trying to enjoy the sick, sore-sort of look which came into her face soon after ; resisting, for the sake of his dignity, taking her into his arms, as nature dictated, and ending the whole tremulous little play at once.

But something instinctively forbade him. At deliberate thoughts of marriage with her, he felt a sickening sense of unrest and disquiet, as one may feel whose house is sand, but not quite so proven.

He wanted her fullest, noblest, unquestioning love in return. It must be servant to neither time nor place, environment nor condition. When this seemed hard to — critical of her, he despised himself, and felt like a brute, and kept away from her presence more hours — it was seldom longer — than usual. Then before him, strengthening his strength when he went back, was the union of her own sister and brother-in-law. It created the high ideal again. He felt less would be unsatisfactory, but he did not cease loving his little friend for that. He only yearned over the ultimate result he craved, when she would one day stand before him, come to him, saying this:

“ Not because you are a Garnet, for all you

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live in this deserted, godless place, your loving helpful wife, Claude!"

He did not understand her all at once, you see. In less deliberate moments, he seemed unworthy to be to her all he should. The easy wit, the accomplished calm, and the intermittent brilliancies of manner seemed superior, insurmountably so. He contrasted her with Mrs. Bax then. He saw how she was easily the prototype of what Mrs. Bax had become. The elder justified the future. He often loved Mrs. Bax through Robbie, worshipped Robbie through Mrs. Bax. The quaintness of wit which both shared, the same impetuous play of mood, the sudden helpless appealing remorse, were twofold snares to him.

It is compensatory to find these things under a scorching sky.

As for Robbie, she appreciated the phases independent of their quality. She was even one of the few women who enjoy getting angry. The pent wrath would invariably climax into a fierce little storm, she would stamp her feet, weep, forgive, or be forgiven, and feel unconsciously refreshed.

In other language, she would be good-natured, willing, even-tempered, for days afterward. It was in this manner that she spent her courtship. She concealed no mood, cloud or shine, from

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Claude. It was honesty, and of a bewildering sort.

The confession was indeliberate, elusive, something you could neither grasp nor accuse her of. If she had taken herself to task, she could not have resisted the concentrating force of their having come to this country, met, loved, known; but her escape from such a reasoning was helpless, feminine, characteristic of woman to a degree. Simply, she was not in love with him. We all believe these non-analyses for a time.

Then the awakening is delight or torture of a positive and unconquerably triumphant kind.

Then there was Mrs. Bax. She never said, "Be careful. You are ruining your chances, dear," as older, calmer, more mistaken women might have. Her acceptance of the situation was girlish. It had even a *gallery* enthusiasm to it, Robbie said, using one of her own small caustic speeches.

Still, however ingenuous her interest, it was of a married sort, strictly speaking. There is a line, you know. She never avoided maidenly words, like intentions, marriage, proposal. It is merely a change of view, as it were, but it seems tremendous before it is accomplished.

She gave a great sigh one day, when Bax and she were left alone by Robbie, Claude having come and gone.

"To watch people make such blind, obstinate

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fools of themselves is like a continued story, exasperating. I don't think I will be able to stand it after a while."

Bax told her it was wrong to interfere, and she cried: "Who was interfering?" The only thing she did not really like about him was his timidity about negotiating, accelerating marriages (matches was the word she used), as if he had been so unhappily married himself.

He said: "No, not necessarily. Rather so happily married. That was it."

The soul few men saw, only felt, rose in a fashion to his eyes. They impelled, sought, adored, — all three.

She turned her head away swiftly, with a superficial attempt at not giving in to him.

"I believe you, but it is illogical," she cried weakly.

Still, since one unfortunate lapse from reserve, she 'd said nothing at all to her sister.

It had been quite late, more so than usual. Claude and Robbie had sat just out of ear-shot, under their window, the moonlight flooding the space in which they sat. It was picturesque, sentimental, pretty. Now and again, Robbie had touched some little finger-notes for him on Mees Bax's violin. Then a song or so from this, infrequently accompanied. It was quaint, free little music like joyful fairy hosts at play.

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The air was vague with trembling, pervasive sentiment. When they bade each other good-night, Robbie made for her own little staircase. She longed to be alone in her little attic room, not even Rel this evening. Her heart was astir with its little burdens; little, I should not use the word: out of such burdens and women nations are made and lost.

Into this tender scene an almost unforgivable element was introduced. It was the head and shoulders of young Mrs. Weffold. Her hair was *négligée*, and her form *en déshabillé*, to a startling measure. She was in her night-dress, and spoke with unwonted animation.

"Did he propose?" she asked.

Robbie burst into tears.

She said it was cruel, cruel, cruel! Mr. Bax, awakened out of his slumbers, tried to assure her it was not. Mrs. Bax, still *en déshabillé*, sat apart and made impenitent remarks on the subject from time to time. Once she said very loudly, yet not above the tone in which ladies quarrel:

"If you were n't so disappointed yourself, you would n't feel so badly about it."

Then Robbie said she was going home. She could n't stand it any longer. Right then, too, if you please; and, choking and sobbing, made toward her own little staircase, presumably to pack her trunk. But somehow it was Mrs. Bax's

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arms she got into, and nothing would do but they must go off together to talk it over in Robbie's room, so as not to awaken Don and the elephant. They were only sorry this separated them from Bax. Bax looked very resigned, and felt he could bear this separation. They amused him, save as to time. He was sleepy; yet husbands learn all these things by degrees. He was almost in his room again, when Robbie rushed down the stairs.

"Bax, dear old Bax!" she cried, kissing him with sisterly fervor, "you took sides with me against your wife; I will never forget it."

"He always does those things," Mrs. Bax said, very simply, hardly realizing how it sounded. "He knows I will understand."

Bax was nearly asleep when she came back to their room. He watched her as she moved about.

"Rel, are n't you coming to bed?" he asked.

"No, not just yet," she answered, "I want to talk to you."

"It must be midnight. You girls have been silly enough," he returned.

"No," she said, "it's only eleven. See! I have my slippers on and this double gown. Bax, listen."

A fairy lamp burned over the great open fireplace, and by this he saw her go to the child's

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little crib, and kneel down, and fold her arms around it and croon-like over the tender form.

"Rel, Rel!" he cried. It was the quiet, little tone which brought his presence to her—his mateship to her, one should not mince at the word. How it stirred love to speech within her!

"Oh, Bax, it is sweet to have had the joy,—my boy!"

She was moving around in quick, restless fashion, and suddenly threw herself on the floor by his side. He put out his arms and caught her.

"Oh, Bax," she said, "oh, Bax, barely God can separate us now! This is eternal. What is death to such love? Bax, won't you answer? We belong to one another—we and our children."

"Yes," he answered, "forever, I hope."

She still kept his hand, but sank down in a heap on the floor at his bedside.

"Come," he said, "you will take cold."

"No, I want to ask you something. Bax, how do men propose?"

His face softened. Above her head, he was privileged to enjoy her whimsicalities.

"Once," he returned mock gravely, "a poor fellow must have proposed to you. Why not ask him about it?"

"But, Bax,—men nowadays are so silly. I

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am sure Claude likes Robbie, and may be, after a long, long time, we might induce her —”

“Oh, Rel, now! To me!”

“Well, why does n’t he ask her? Listen, ‘Will you be my wife?’ — five words, five silly little words, Bax! Men are such cowards. As well hesitate and go into foolish and tormenting heroics over ‘please pass the bread!’”

“May be we forget,” said Bax.

“Were you ever such a fool, now, Bax?”

He gave a low laugh. He could afford it. She felt deep, happy notes struck by it from his very soul.

“Listen, ‘Please be my wife —’”

“No, *please* to the bread, Bax, not to the woman. One learns that even in school. Either a tone of command or entreaty, nothing ever mediocre. You should remember that, lest you marry again.”

“Well, without the please, then — ‘Will you be my wife?’ The words sound horribly familiar. Rel, I’ve said them myself, brave and all as you think me. Why, I can see myself rehearsing them now. ‘Miss Laurence, please pass the butter. Laurel, will you be my wife?’ That is very life-like. I remember it all, now. I believe it was my first lesson. It had variations afterward.”

“You’re making fun of me,” she cried. Still

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she reached both hands upward, and he lay in the shadow, holding them both.

"No, I'm not. I tell you, it is like a dream, now, but it happened; and though the gentleman in question grew to be a staid enough sort of old fellow afterward, why, nevertheless, he suffered this temporary aberration."

"Do tell me."

"What you would have me say, vain woman, is about the cause. It was very tall, and deserving of any flights like this. Are you coming to sleep like a sensible woman now?"

"Bax, did I imagine it once, but years ago, when we stood by the well, and I asked for a drink of water, did you nearly say —"

"May we both drink out the same cup forever? I was equal to it then," said Bax.

"No, oh, no, that is awful, that is horrid, destroying, Bax; but did you really try to mumble something about the water of life? Robbie imagined Claude did something like that, and it was a resurrection. Still I could hardly believe —"

"But men do," urged Bax. He stretched and laughed aloud with enjoyment. It went through her to every nerve.

"How did you eventually ask me, Bax, dear?"

"Eventually, I dropped on my knee, I presume, in the orthodox fashion, and asked you like a knight of old."

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"No, you did n't, now!"

"I wrote you?" Bax ventured, much ashamed. He knew these little things hurt women.

"Eventually, sir," she replied with a fine assumption of anger, "eventually you never asked me. Bax, how could you have been so lacking? What if Don ever finds out?"

"If I never asked you, how were we married, *mein frau*?"

She laughed now. It was like a ripple in music. They were looking deep into the tried true souls of each other. Through that look she said, still smiling:

"We understood."

But Claude had never been married. He could not presume to understand. He felt too uncourageous to try, even in impetuous moments.

Other times he only wandered as far as the imaginary hedge which separates all early lovers for a stage. Once in a great while he had leaned over—oblivious of everything for the instant—toward her side.

Then there would be her mood, perhaps, to bring him to himself again, like a little marble statue, wondering, undecided, chilling; yet, for one little instant, he had thought it human enough to kiss.

Of course there were all manner of moments.

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One of these — brave, because he was going away, and sure, because he had not seen her, lovely with both charm and fault — was when he had wandered one afternoon down to Weffold's, only to find the place deserted except by Sal. She let him wander around by himself. The great vine-clad porch was strung with a hammock, its pillow still dented, where a head had lain. A book lay face downward on the floor. It was Carlyle's "Heroes."

Claude picked it up, skimming sympathetically the forsaken pages, yet he was not even thinking, perhaps, of Robbie, till he saw opposite this sentence she had scribbled a remark in pencil:

"And now, if worship even of a star had some meaning in it, how much more might that of a Hero. . . . It is, to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life."

Her words were a little wandering, ill-written :
"I don't believe this."

Suddenly, obeying a sweeping impulse, he wrote positively next to this, just —

"You do!"

Then he left.

Much of the wasted intensity which was afterward spent in avoiding the understanding in this, was more than counteracted, perhaps, by the moments which were not so intense. As when he

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had told a lady before her one day — that he had five little nephews, and she had replied: “No, four! Had n’t Mrs. Dick told them?”

He commenced to count them — deliberate, unconscious, deferential, as usual.

He said:

“Mr. Ralph’s two — Edward’s three — Mr. Dick’s four.”

The lady stared politely; so he commenced again, starting in at the other end on this occasion, as if it would work out differently:

“Mr. Dick’s one — Mr. Edward’s two — Mr. Ralph’s four.”

As the lady waited, while he turned a dull, torturing, unexplainable red, he heard Robbie laughing.

She was saying, in her Chicago way, but with a note beneath he interpreted as kindly:

“Let me do it. Mr. Ralph’s two is three — Edward’s four — Dick’s five!”

When they said “good-bye,” he could not look at her, jest over it, only suffer.

It would be unendurable, seeing the concealed mirth in her eye. Stung by his misconception, she let him go, and then cried because of the unnecessary cruelty of his position. Don had been the fifth one in his mind at the time.

SIMMONS'S ADVICE

IT was July the second.

The great man of Hope sat before his desk in the mine-office. He was busy over some papers apparently ; but when Simmons, the book-keeper, was not looking, he gave a side study to the seminary handwriting on an envelope. It had evidently been addressed to Mr. Garnet first, with so much space between the Mr. and the Garnet, the writer had been able to slip in the Claude afterward, without much inconvenience attached thereto. Claude wondered why, as he looked. She had really had no reason, but it gave them both something nice to do. As for the book-keeper, he was balancing some columns apparently ; but when the great man of Hope looked especially busy, Simmons, in his turn, made a side study of him. This kept up for some time.

Occasionally, the eyes of both men wandered out toward the town. There were moments when one could not see it. Great gusts of hot, swirling sand enfolded it now and again, as it were the embrace of some elemental giant. Then

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there 'd be a blue sullen sky, yet deep with suave hellish beauty, an atmosphere between earth and sky, almost visible, it was so disordered; and lower, the parched sand-swept earth, as if a warm, whitening, feverish breath were blowing over it.

This continued to grow as an impression, until Simmons did not try to stand it. He was not made to submit exactly.

He simply said aloud:

"I'll be damned!" and leaned over the table. The whirlwind went high this time.

Claude did not give any intimation, save to cover the seminary handwriting entirely now, until Simmons pushed his chair back to the wall, and gave up altogether.

Then Claude said to the other:

"I don't think you need worry about hurrying it along. The end seems to be coming pretty nicely without much aid."

"I don't know about that," returned the book-keeper, belligerently. He was a big fellow, and the heat made him ill-natured. He did not want to force words with one of the Garnets, but his patience was becoming exhausted. Old Wef-ford had ceased their supply the day before. It was pretty generally known now. He felt enraged, the mere strength in him. Imagine several hundred people, an almost endless stocking of good American dollars, one's pride and

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independence, at the mercy of one untrammelled old Dutch fool of a miser. When Simmons did not like people, nor approve of some unexpected trait in them, he laid it to the Dutch. He had become especially fond of this location for every human weakness since he had been associated with Claude. Obstinacy was the word he had not searched far enough for.

He felt Claude's well-scheme to be almost absolutely futile. After two hundred and sixty feet of boring, they had acknowledged it was almost useless to continue.

But Claude had not countermanded his order. He said it would only be a day or so's difference at most, and he would like to try it. He did not mean to be antagonistic really, but was full of the sheer, direct, power-wasting effort of the young. We do such things at play, when children; but it is recuperative triumph in the end.

For his part, Simmons did not mean unkindly to Claude or to the mine. He took the whole situation more complexly, that was all. He knew a good deal about the workings of the company also, and if Claude had not been sent in charge of it, he would have rather expected the sinecure himself.

At any rate, he felt privileged to speak his mind to them. He was an old school-mate of Richard's, a shrewd, capable, yet unfortunate fellow who

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had been impeded by an early family and such mammoth responsibilities, and he had thought this out-of-the-world appointment a very dispensation from Providence. He was entirely scrupulous as yet; but he was very ambitious, and there might come a time when the line between justice and injustice, selflessness and selfishness in commerce, would not be such an insurmountable division as now. Simmons and his wife were ambitious for themselves and for their children; and ambition is not so rigid as honor, nor yet affection, nor yet a barbed wire fence, say what you may of it; yet is it greater. We are close to the field of our neighbor, and there is no division. As we love his fruit more, we love our neighbor less; while honor, too, goes out the back gate from us, and desire is alone.

He bent his keen eyes on Claude now. They were winning eyes in the long run; if the right opportunities were accorded, the eyes of a financier.

"Claude," he said, "I am going to start a prohibited subject with you."

"Well," answered Claude.

"I do not like to intrude unnecessarily or unkindly," Simmons commenced shortly, "but it is not possible you still believe in the ultimate honor of Bax Weffold's actions throughout this affair?"

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"The principles of the belief have been undisturbed," answered the young employer. "The atmosphere alone is subject to criticism for a while."

He had kept his eyes fixed on Simmons, and chosen his words slowly, as if they were reassuring himself as well.

"God!" was Simmons's only answer, exploding from him like patience reaching an end at last.

Claude felt embarrassed, at a disadvantage, somehow, for all he felt the absolute sincerity of his own words. Then Simmons took another route swiftly. He threw one arm out flat, and tried to talk indifferently. He recognized that the man he addressed was a mere boy in years beside himself, yet his superior officer; also that Claude as Claude was exasperating to a degree; yet as the same unassuming young fellow had walked out of his very house months before, on his arrival, that these same Simmons might walk in, it was a difficult situation.

Yet, under the weight of such circumstances, his tone was kindly.

"You are being buncoed all through," he said.

Claude bit his lips before he answered. He did not know quite how to deal with Simmons, nor did he like that word.

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"I have no reason to believe so," said the great young man, simply.

He looked extremely boyish during his defence.

"Reason—you do not listen to reason," the book-keeper perverted, warming indignantly. "You come here utterly inexperienced—"

"Wait," cried Claude, "a minute. What does experience count? Experience!—to be so jaundiced by a bad turn or so, that one puts a microscope to one's own brother's motives. Experience is merely cynicism half the time, Simmons, only called by a milder name."

The book-keeper passed this over.

"I am not wanting you to see with my eyes," he said, "any more than I want to see with yours."

He paused here, to take breath most likely; but to Claude it seemed significant beyond a measure. It seemed to mean Robbie, so he flushed.

"Think several moments," Simmons urged vehemently, "think, Claude! There is a great deal at issue. You are sent to guard interests too great to be estimated by the ordinary method,—the figures of a bank account. The yield here has been tremendous. The monthly profits are too vital a piece of good luck to tamper with. Bax Weffold and his father have been cheek by jowl all year. His efforts in the old man's in-

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terests have been unswerving. He has made no attempt—none, or we should have heard of it, to check the wholesale usury practised. All over the country there have been immense cattle deals afloat. You—I—every one has heard of it. You must be blind no longer, my boy. The man back of every devil's scheme is your hero's father. No one else has capital enough. He has starved out all the little ranches, bought in on several of the great crippled companies,—these are your friends, the men you are standing with against your own interests!”

He saw Claude's face had turned perfectly white, so he followed up his advantage, politicly.

“Hundreds are injured by Dick's annihilation.” He leaned over, more and more in earnest. “Old Weffold is the only one who is not,” he exclaimed. “Can you conceive a selfishness which is greater?”

“One!” cried Claude, springing to his feet, “if I condemn my friend without a hearing, making him a mere scapegoat of circumstances. You know what a liar circumstances is, Simmons. I am old enough to have found that out for myself.

“There was my own brother, a blot on the very face of the earth—a pariah—a by-name of dishonor in every home in New York, and all through this, Simmons,—you know you can

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bear me out — we knew him merely as a gentle, noble, mistaken soul.”

The manhood which had supported him clean through departed as his own trembling words touched the very quivering nerve of that old sorrow. He did not care to let Simmons see his face, so he turned quickly and looked out of the window.

Simmons was touched for the time, too.

Then he said :

“If you keep up a friendly appearance with these people before the world, your hands are tied legally, socially, in every manner. Sentiment is all very well in a measure. It will not run your brother’s mine; it will not put bread into the miners’ mouths; it will not supply the mill with water.”

“What do you want me to do?” Claude asked.

“I would establish my disapproval beyond all doubt,” Simmons answered. “I would stop all friendly communication with them; I would persecute old Weffold as he has you and yours; I would wrench his authority from him, or leave his old carcass rotting on his own damned soil.”

There was a pause.

“These things are impossible for me to do,” Claude replied, after a second. After another, he left the room. It was not as if he were running

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away from the decision, as there had been a finality of almost a hopeless nature to his words.

After he left, Simmons arose slowly and went over to the young superintendent's desk. A letter lay uncovered on it. It was brief, bright, and yet tender. It said :

"I thank you, more than mere words can express for me, for all the pleasure you are constantly putting in our way. It will be so nice to attend the Fourth of July ball with you. It will make me remember — America."

The inference was droll, piquant.

Simmons threw his hands above his head. He almost screamed in his impotent rage.

To himself, he said, concentrating a great deal :

"God!" — again, "I suppose all the great crises of the world would have been just such failures, if the actors had all been in love at the time — bah!"

THE CAUSE OF A FIGHT

THE Fourth of July ball at Hope ended between twelve and one of the subsequent morning, because several fellows who had had too much whiskey, too little dancing, and only one girl between them, commenced shooting at each other. They aimed conscientiously at each other's heads, but missing these, they were arrested and packed off by the constable.

Later, Miss Laurence and Mr. Garnet were walking down toward her home. They quarrelled part of the distance, because he had wanted to drive her, and she had cried out impatiently :

“Don't always tack something rich on to yourself. It is like a constant proof of your identity.”

Claude said :

If there were n't a hint in that that she enjoyed —ahem !—him more than the proof of him, why he thought he ought to be angry.

Then, in a sweep of contrition, she moved nearer to him. It was dark, unlit, and the road one of sand.

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At that he said, as if he had not thought before of it, that a buggy was not a sign of miserable richness ; but she would not argue this point at all. Her thin shoes hurt her feet, and after a while, she said, it made them worse, being *white!* But he merely laughed, and was above the inevitable wrangle this time.

At last they saw the little home lights burning for her, and she said :

“ To-day my sister told me a funny story. She used to be very beautiful and popular at home, before she married. You would never think it? I would n’t myself. People talk yet of her manner. Unless it is a poor girl who has it, do you think any one notices a manner very much? It is like a gown which is too expensive for one’s circumstances. Well, then, every one needed her to fill out, as it were. Of course, after my sister married, there was a stop to all of that. She simply became an article of domestic furniture, like a stove. Men never have stoves or wives before they are married — everything else. In fact, she had not been to a ball for four years when they arrived here. Last year, of course, there was a ball, as usual, a masquerade, on the Fourth of July.

“ You can’t imagine what a funny thing happened? She could not stand it. She stole off and went, never even told Bax about it. Of

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course it would have been immense fun if a girl had done it. But, after all her trouble, she was the sickest person of her pleasure — just think! Then they had that other baby, and she suffered every step she danced.

"Then she went home early — but it is rather *sad*, is n't it?"

"Yes," he answered, "very — poor Mrs. Bax."

"She told how she stumbled back, half screaming (she was so afraid for the baby), and how Bax stood, as if he were crazed, by the gate, afraid she had run away from him. Of course there was a reconciliation scene, but she said he did not blame her, only was more tender, more helpful afterward, and she said, for her part, the old folly died forever that night.

"Don't you see any thing to laugh at in it?"

The young face she was peering at through the darkness was still, almost holy in its solemnity.

"I think it is realizing Heaven to love like that," he said.

She went in half-frightened, stirred to a throbbing sort of response to his voice.

Bax was waiting up for her. She felt grateful for the kindness in it, just as a little child might have for expected warmth and welcome. He was sitting at a table covered with writing and magazines, out on the closed-in porch. It was

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quite a large sort of room, and was all dark in a sense, save just where he was sitting. There the candle threw a light just around him, sombrely. Robbie went in, across to him, and, sitting on the arm of the chair he was occupying, put her arm around his neck. He pulled her head down and kissed it. Then she went over to the comfortable little lounge, which was getting so wofully shabby lately, and sat there staring at him. She was in the shadow, too, but he grasped the outlines appreciatively, — the now rather slim, dainty form, that absolute possession which *ennui* sometimes held of the really mobile little face, the robes which clung so affectionately to her.

He said: "Well, little girl, are you glad to be back to the nest again?"

She answered: "Yes!" like a little sigh.

Bax kept staring at her quizzically. He said:

"I don't know much about parties; but I don't imagine you enjoyed yourself. I think Rel has told me it is when the men don't dance with girls that they don't have a good time?"

She cast him a daintily annihilating look, and, with one desperate little motion, threw the deeper mood off her, as if it had been a cloak. She came, smiling, radiant, mocking, out of it. Her prim hair lent itself to the madness; a curl or so fell out of place. Her eyes were dazzling.

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She moved around noiselessly on the worn old boards. She dipped, swung, saluted imaginary partners, as she went. Her lips kept tune to the wild, rollicking little music.

Suddenly, toward the end of this performance, the voice broke out—low, yet sure, glad, clear, like a merry wind-up :

“Ladies, left hand to your sonnies !
Alaman ! grand right and left !
Balance all and swing your honeys !
Pick 'em up and feel their heft !”

She swept a grand curtsey all at once.

He applauded softly.

“I take it back ! I take it back,” he called.

“Oh, such a ball !” she cried, and fell back laughing and panting. “The American flag here. The American flag there. The American flag as guest of honor ! Thus the fact that the walls were not plastered—not even painted, in truth quite boardy—was hid. Girls in red, white, and blue ; some in red, cream, and green ; some in white, blue, and pink ; the inevitably accomplished error. At first bashfulness of almost a painful sort ; one never thought they would overcome it. On one side of the floor, nervous, carefully toiletted females,—such toilettes ! Mine was the only one that did not wrinkle.”

“Robbie !” he interrupted reprovingly.

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She caught the gleam back of his sternness, and gave him an airy little toss.

“Don’t you like me to be honest?”

“No, I like you womanly best of all.”

Then she said:

“Oh, that is it! You like us to preserve our individuality by not deviating from storytelling?”

It was a labored, lofty little speech, and he appeared quite crushed by it, so she picked up the light thread of her narration again.

“The row of chairs on the other side of the hall was quite empty. The heroes of the occasion were all clinging to the posts around the door, as if they were frightened. Then a few baby buggies appeared. That was quite an innovation. They were wheeled toward the edge of the floor. Claude and I had a quarrel about it. He said the mothers could not have gone without the babies. I said, then all should have stayed at home. There were also a great many little girls dancing who should have still been in baby buggies. Perhaps it was a maternal error; perhaps merely an infantile escape.

“And the music! Did ever I hear such music before? You could have felt it, if you had been hidden in a bale of cotton for years and years. And the darlinest part of all was the way the instruments and performers changed from time to time: now it was a thin man and an accordion;

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now a fat man with great, swollen cheeks and a flute; now merely the arms of a man and a fiddle."

"So every one could dance, I suppose?"

She saw how he was enjoying it. The dead gold of his hair; the keen, speaking, scholarly eyes; the strong mouth, so flexible at times, responsive now to her swift wit and quaint flowing humor,—all these were swept up in a little glance.

"Shall I go to bed now?"

"No, tell me more," Bax pleaded.

She looked delighted, matchlessly so. The repressed vanity of other times crept into glad, free existence.

"The first dance was almost a frost; but soon a man got to calling out numbers, and every one warmed up. They got mixed,—men, women, babies, boys, little girls. No one was a belle; rather, may be, every one was one. No one could have danced more than her neighbor, because every one's numbers were quite full. I think a stout girl attired *à la* 'Columbia' made more stir than the rest of us; but I don't think it was greater popularity—more the enthusiasm of patriotism."

Here Bax's mirth worked into an unchecked, hearty laugh.

She stared at him a minute. She had not in-

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tended that to be funny, and thought his best enjoyment quite misplaced.

"And did n't I dance, though? I made my feet quite sore, and such dignitaries! Who was there? I can't think of all in a small five minutes. Now and again a face appeared which was quite familiar. A great many I placed right at once.

"It was delightful remembering who they were. I felt quite homelike.

"And they were so muddled. All Rel's dear women friends: the little California artist; that fat Mexican hidalgo who came searching for his lost cow one day, — tearful, you must remember? — because it was the property of his 'poor Madre, senor, who was an angel in heaven!' And we wondered if his poor Madre's lamentation over this rambling bovine interfered with the heavenly harps that day? — pshaw! Bax, you could remember if you tried —

"Even that antediluvian old woman whom Rel visits because her son is no account. I can't quite grasp the thought-connective, I must say. Then another pet of your dear *frau's*, Mr. Wef-fold, who, previous to this dissipation, was never known to do anything active, except smoke, rock, and have melancholia; also that pretty boy who worked here last winter, who ate so many onions you could trace him seventeen miles or so.

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"I wish I had a picture of it all; but the artist was in no mood to see one, or he would not have participated so vitally himself. In the animation of the hour, he forgot the civilized method so completely that he got to waltzing with Dunman's little widow, and, when they got around to her baby buggy, *rocked* it for her, and then went on."

After both had finished some prolonged merriment over the end of her remarks, she went toward the table and stood by it with her hand in his. She felt very loving toward him, and realized, with a sharp pang or so about it, that while her little, foolish, white hand lay in his strong, brotherly clasp, his was horny here and there, like a laborer's, and very hard. When he and Rel were married, there had not been a finer-looking fellow in all the world.

"I am going now, at last," she said. "You were our good old Baxie to wait up."

She pulled away and went off a step or so. Then she came back, and stood by the table, leaning on it this time.

"I did n't enjoy myself, Bax, really. It was not that I did n't have enough partners, only some men shot at each other. I'm not used to shooting yet."

"Oh, so that was it! I am sorry, girlye. What fools these mortals be, to be sure! What was it?"

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"Well, it was this way," the girl returned. "One danced with the other's girl. She wasn't a pretty girl either,—and a Mormon at that, I think. But it made the first man very angry, so they got into words. Then they just seemed to think of things to make each other angry. We cleared back. No one seemed to interfere with them. One was a mine fellow; one works here. They cursed a great deal, too, on the side. Then the quarrel seemed to leave the girl altogether—fall on to some one else. Some one the first man trusted, was a fool for trusting, was a tenderfoot for trusting, was a baby still at breast for trusting—lots of blankety blanks—awful—bad—words thrown in! The owner of these did not feel very glib-tongued, I fancy, so he whipped out his revolver. That was the end."

She leaned over and kissed him on the forehead lightly, then picked up her candle, and backed slowly off. At the door, when she paused, he asked :

"Was it about my father, Robbie?"

"No, not your—father," the girl returned.

His face became transfigured, as if relieved from a great weight.

"Poor fellows,—a woman!"

She stood holding on to the doorknob. Once her lips parted, as if to speak. Then, still clad

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in a spirit of hesitation, she stepped out and shut the door.

Bax went back to his papers. She took a long time to get still. When he felt that she was in her nest in all gentle earnest, he, too, went to his own rest.

Above, in her little room, Robbie moved around without undressing. She went to her window once and looked out, saying, even thinking, nothing. The light she had on her little clumsy country chiffonnier sent a few rays up the road where she was looking. Otherwise the country was an immense blank, all dark.

She came back softly. She set the candle, so she could best see herself. She liked it where the vision was faint, sweet, imperfect in a color-sense, so to speak. She just liked the rich suggestion of some gay, enjoyable phase of life.

Her hair was crowned with a pretty ornament like a diadem of pearls. Her dress was low and white and pretty, neck and cloth almost one. She had a long, drooping cloak lying light on her shoulders. It was exquisitely barbaric, a many-toned Persian silk from older days.

She was satisfied with the vision. The look she sent into the eyes of her own pretty image

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melted after a second, it was so direct. Her voice sounded distant, too.

“If you were a very rich woman, like — Mrs. Garnet, do you know what you would do? You would come down to Weffold’s with a silly glass raised to your eye and say: ‘So this is your rural hero, this great quiet fellow with the hob-nail shoes and — the Christ-like eyes.’”

She kept on looking. Presently, the image seemed to reply to her, in quite a spontaneously natural manner:

“Poor old darling!”

She liked her real self too well then to act any longer, so she commenced to unbutton her garments.

The last drowsy thoughts before friendly sleep came creeping across her pillow, were for Bax, too.

Then, sleeping, she dreamed of him. He was in a cathedral and in trouble, and she was fighting for him desperately. Following this, was a hopeless disturbing chaos. Then she was in the same cathedral with absolute calm about her, and a conception of the Galilean looking down upon her with those deep, unruffled, wondering eyes.

The young son of the Garnets had gone up the road from Robbie, exalted in mind and soul.

Dark, dust, material happenings, dwindled into

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the insignificant. He planned noble uses of his wealth; he embraced the diviner truths of fraternal encouragement. He did not know men would have smiled at him, and then turned away to wink. Love was enshrined on such a throne that night, he called it universal good, and nearly prayed.

If, in the midst of his plans, he said "we" now and again, or "she," or "Robbie," remember that he was a millionaire, the son and son's son of one.

And when God had finished fashioning the earth, He wanted a purpose for creation, that it might search and find. So, in the hearts of men He buried a treasure, calling it God or Truth. This was to be their labor: its reward, eternal happiness. And smiling, He laid in the bowels of the earth, an effigy of the All-Powerful, called Gold; so one was very like the other, save that one was true.

Then He turned the sons of the earth loose on it, and by that name they lived on it, forgetful that they were His sons also.

And in time some few found the treasure. And these few, men called fools; but when any man found the effigy of it — lo! there was great feasting and praising! And the minds of men became so muddled that they shouted: "This — this

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only procures happiness." True, the few real finders smiled, knowing better, but God could only pity, aware how like He had made one to the other.

So amongst our sins to be first condoned because of their own great temptations, are the little egotisms of the rich.

It is we who should pity: only God who can smile.

IN THE NAME OF GOD — AMEN!

THIS is on a sermon in Arizona; and from this fact we may wind down to many others; but that is the funniest of all—a sermon in Arizona! Why they have told us here God is not; but that is a lie, for God is close to our hearts in great desolation. Surely no dream of His wisdom—this!

This sermon was preached by a girl. Perhaps she should have known better than this. Men—men who are great and wise, just because of their very manhood, men should be preachers, Robbie, girl, and as their rhetoric and their virtue wax ever grander, listening women should weep for the frail souls within them; while here, at this touching climax, here, the Devil can get in his laugh.

And in no cramped, choking church was this sermon. Under the sky, which is so far off, so endless, so blue, and so eternal, our souls kneel within us, and we must pray.

And on no velveted floor was this. It was in a vegetable field, rutted with great water ditches, where the congregation sat on two black, empty

In the Name of God — Amen!

boxes, and the preacher sat on a mound above them, saving only once, when she stood.

On the field of a heathen Chinese, do you hear?

The great light of Christianity was not his, and were the light to shine with great effulgence, lo! — he was but a mole, and toiled as it played round him. Yet with the very sweat of his brow, poor Lon, he throve, sowing great patches of beets and cabbage, coarse winter food, and sad, sickly rows of crinkly lettuce, which tasted well of mine-tailings, so I have heard. And these grew around Robbie, as she preached. Incense was not there, of course, but tall onion-shoots took the place of this. They were keen and tempting to one's appetite. After a while thought of them stole through her words, or *seemed to*. (I quote little Weffold.) It is the same thing.

The congregation was composed of three members. I thought I would refer to the subject as the reporters do at home sometimes: "Such and such a bishop preached at Grace Church on Sunday to a large and fashionable audience." Three members, I say, not people; in this way I must say of my congregation, as Lowell has beautifully said of Dante's exquisite language, it was bare and perfect.

My congregation was like that description. It ran the gamut of all that could be desired, critically or financially. There were no poor

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people present. One was a millionaire. A big church often does no better than this. Two did not understand the sermon, so it was very correct, very true, in the altogether. Of these, one was a toy elephant, and the other was a little child. He held the elephant up to hear the speaker. Once the idea occurred to him, that if his mother would sew buttons near the elephant's ears, it would aid his sight on such occasions.

During Robbie's sermon he thought of this, in the wandering way a little child's mind dips bee-like into such mental honey, only a little baby sip, and then on forever.

In apologizing for all these things, I come to the text of the sermon. She did not choose it from such a chapter, proclaim it to be such a verse. In fact, she forgot that texts should come from the Bible. Like many another amateur in the matter, sermons represented something vague and necessary to her, like an authorized Chastening Evil, to which the world, the flesh, and the devil within one acted as a resistant force.

The time, as you may have inferred, was askew also. It was not 11 A. M. of a Sunday, nor 7:30 P. M. (:45 in summer).

This was two in the afternoon.

It was also such a brief sermon that no one went to sleep through it.

In the Name of God — Amen !

But here heterodoxy seems to have accomplished its limit, so we will say no more.

It was the anniversary of her arrival at Hope.

The text was from Bryant. I think she chose him because he was an American. She would not have chosen a European just then for the world, — she was dealing so directly with the very fountain-waters of honesty. The exhortation was for sincerity. It was her interpretation.

She said :

“ I do not care to give the whole quotation, as it is too long. Besides, I do not remember it all ! ”

(This was flirting with the congregation, but a very forgivable departure, if one stops to analyze it, impregnable dignity one minute, then the whole virtuous barricade demolished by one sweeping little glance from two pretty eyes.)

“ So live, that when thy summons comes to join

The innumerable caravan . . .

Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,

Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed

By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave

Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

“ I do not believe entirely in heaven,” the preacher commenced. “ It is beyond the line, and we cannot grasp it ; so children should be

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taught to aim solely for the satisfaction of a good life. Then, before death, if only for a day, a moment, a flash at the parting of soul and body, we know the endeavor has been worth while.

“I have seen many unsuccessful lives — many, many, which were so half-lived that, at the approach of dissolution, there went a prayer to the Decree Inexorable ‘that such and such a moment might be lived again.’ ”

God had not willed the law so. She thought the secret of all true living lay in simplicity ; that the most successful woman she had ever known was one who had not realized that she should show any difference between her treatment of Queen Victoria and a washer-woman.

It was told that to have no enemy, a person must have bowed as low to fools and knaves as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue. But Mr. Sheridan had erred in this. She knew differently. For this humble person whom people called old-fashioned, till she was dead, had bowed as low to fools and knaves, as she had to the honest dignity of genius, but in Christ’s name. Christ’s name ! It was very funny to speak of Christ and society in one breath. To see a woman kind to all suffering creatures, because she was of such simple faith that she did not know that the Litany, etc., were merely the properly toned ceremonies of a gorgeous church.

In the Name of God — Amen !

A life such as this, Robbie said, was a demonstration not of those great Shakespearian tides in the lives of a few men, but of the simple gracious dignity of Mr. Bryant's, which was attainable by all.

The moral was the eternal principle of truth. From simplicity, from sincerity of motive, could come no errors damning to eternal peace. Thus, if temptation were to come, the chain of past things would not allow it. It would be a dose of poison so foreign as to be cast out before the healthy soul absorbed it.

Then, in simple, unrhetical contrast, she introduced Carl Weffold's hate. Its evil breath made heavy the very air as she talked.

She spoke understandingly, intuitively of its birth,—a little jealousy of the soul, a weed nourished by life's entire waters, until the good, the endeavor, the better mastery of evil, were drawn into the complex toils.

It was the first deviation from the fountain principles, she said; the checked intention, the unacted impulse, the still-born thought, the uncorrected wrong,—these were the great telling things. Our lives went on after, it is true, but the weed was there, and possibilities, beyond all control, were given ground to grow in.

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This seemed the middle of the sermon, and she should have gone on just so, unnecessarily telling about her simple woman and her complex man, until the listeners lost the force of her moral. But she stopped short just at this juncture. The onions permeated the air, as if they were a little song with which the earth was flouting our dainty manners. The congregation waited.

"That is all," the preacher said. She was tired. She did not know yet about preachers, that some were to tire people, not to tire themselves.

The effect on her listeners was immediate; would, would it were always so!

The child stirred out of his long calm with a little half sigh which was very patient. He mumbled something gently, — still dreamily, — little words, such as little children utter, which fly here and there like down:

"The elfer no can tell," he was saying. "The elfer no can tell what a' mean."

The millionaire rose to his feet. The passion of reformation was on him. His voice struck the very rocks of confession.

"Prove your words," he urged to the girl before him. "Make sincerity an humble, daily practice. Be my wife."

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CLAUDE observed the outer darkness almost lovingly. It was one with which he had grown familiar; when the sky far overhead is so studded, it makes all a great uncivilized land dark by very contrast. The distance between earth and sky had increased to him also. Here there were no crude efforts—magnificent as men may judge them—to reach more than one or two simple adobe stories.

He sat now in his room in the great silent mill of which he and his brothers were largely master. He was not in communication with any living soul, unless we except Simmons. Simmons had a wire which entered this room; he, a wire which reached Simmons. If there were to be a riot, a menacing, unlawful disturbance of whatever nature, he would be acquainted with it before it had barely organized, at least before it occurred. It was the drinking men that he was afraid of, none of the other ones.

There are many paths to greatness; but this young man had chosen one quite unfrequented. He did not know much about the rôle. Perhaps,

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had a newspaper reporter asked his opinion about the necessary qualities to a great man's greatness, he might have been clever enough to put his simple creed into this simple language, only I doubt it:

"Just in being great."

After the closing down of the great mill and the cessation of labor in the mine, Simmons had come to him that evening:

"I don't want to break down our contract about tale-bearing, nagging, dealing out retail rumors," he said, a really intolerant tone to his voice, yet utterly patient smile in his eyes, "but I think a guard would not be a bad idea at the mill. It would prevent any possible destruction."

"Not probable?" said Claude, looking up.

"I will not go that far," the book-keeper replied.

Claude hesitated.

"Would you mind telling me what you might fear?" he asked Simmons. "I have thought of some such folly myself."

The book-keeper forgot his intolerance of the young superintendent, and caught at the apt word, eagerly.

"Folly, that is it," he cried. "I don't think a man in Hope would wilfully harm one inch of Dick's possessions" (he purposely aimed the shaft), "but there is a theosophical idea I've read of,

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that murder-thought of any violent description is contagious, like small-pox or the plague. At least it is to that effect. Old Weffold has never been popular. That is statistical, so you need n't find fault with me for mentioning it. Lately, as you, I — all have seen, the unpopularity has grown. May be it is only attacking universal human error, rather than any one individual, to say it has involved innocent parties, instead of keeping to its first victim. That is like small-pox, too."

"I don't know that we need to go over that," interjected Claude, kindly.

"But it is only one issue," the book-keeper returned. "You are not experienced enough to see these things."

Claude tried to be oblivious.

"What," continued Simmons, "what has justly, or unjustly, befallen Bax Weffold, may befall — us, too."

He often spoke of the syndicate that way. It pleased him.

"As usual, there is a good percentage of the men about who live in saloons, any way. More will be driven there by idleness, or because they fancy they need buoying during this episode. In fact, concisely speaking, there will be lots of drunken men around."

The young superintendent smiled.

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"That about says it all," he returned, "with apologies to both morality and rhetoric."

"The devil a bit you seem to care," snapped Simmons. "This might be blown sky-high any night."

Claude suddenly became earnest.

"But I don't think it will be," he remarked. "Allowing all you say, that the men would not want to harm Dick, but might do so; that a grudge can involve innocent parties; that drunken men don't know quite what they want — why, there is another point in our favor —"

Simmons leaned forward.

"It is their *liveliness*, you know," answered Claude. "As for the watch-guard, I am going to sleep at the mill myself."

"Do you think that safe?" asked Simmons.

"I am not thinking of it at all," answered Claude. "That phase is not worth it."

"For all that," said Simmons, "you have helped antagonize the situation, and —"

Claude stopped him authoritatively.

"For that reason, I am the proper choice," he said. "If any one is to enjoy their drunken rowdyism, why, I'm the man. Only," he ended hotly, boyishly, "I should like it known around, that my life is only a circumstance in the result. But, if harm is done one piece of our fixings, one inch of Dick's ground, not one man in Arizona

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shall receive employment at our mine. It would be ungrateful. Dick has been the best friend they ever had, — kind, cosmopolitan, forgiving. We'd import men quicker than a wink."

"Oh!" said Simmons, as if surprised at the demonstration.

Then he had gone home.

On this evening Claude thought over this and other things. He felt vexed at the situation. It was ludicrous with tragic possibilities. Reared as he had been in a lawful city, a life or so was more than the incident should ask of the state of things. He could not become familiar with killing.

He yawned over his papers, the thoughts edging themselves in between his lengthy accounts to the syndicate home. Just then, beyond the room in which he was working, some noise broke the almost lifeless stillness. He started and sprang to his feet quickly. Almost before he took a step farther, he knew that it was the swish of a woman's skirt.

Surprised, yet not wanting to be taken at a disadvantage, he opened the door between them very much wider.

It was a woman. She had evidently been guided by his little light, yet hesitant about declaring her presence. She stood so in the little

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hall now. She was smiling a sort of tremulous reassurance. He continued to peer at her.

He did not realize that it was Mrs. Bax, all at once. In this unusual feminine presence, amongst the great silent stamps, the idle and yet powerful machinery, he felt a sudden ecstasy, half-blind. He thought it was Robbie, — the slim, graceful desolation in which the unexpected figure was clothed for the moment; the delicate indistinct woman's face; the thought that they were alone, and he loved her.

His lips were already parted in vague, soothing words, when she stepped a little forward. In the dim light which came from his little office, he saw that it was Mrs. Bax.

Then a foreboding seized him.

"I have come because I could not help it," she said. The absolute loneliness of their situation lent a certain unusual dignity to her words, almost appealing in its stately primness. He felt this remotely, the only way in which he could feel any fact other than that message which her words conveyed. Yet the exquisite modesty, unconscious as it was, brought infinite consolation to the overwhelming harshness in the case. "I trust I am not too late for — for any plan you may care to make. My sister left to-day for the East to join her old schoolmate's family, the

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one with whom she lived before. She left unexpectedly, as you may imagine."

In the little pause now, her face showed absolutely nothing, yearning as she was about it. No more did his. She held an envelope in her hand. That little scrap of white folded paper seemed the most fateful thing in life to Claude, for those few moments; it was almost like a death warrant; the longer she held it, so much longer could he hope, idiotic as the chance was. Then, without reaching it toward him, she said these things of it:

"Robbie gave this to me for you. I was to send it to-morrow morning—"

She changed, passionately. The negative manner disappeared, became obliterated. Few things serve as comparison for it, only greatest of all a still church, may be, responding to deep sudden notes from an organ.

"See how dishonorable, how unfaithful a steward I am! It lay innocently after she left on our mantel. I never looked at it; only all by itself it acquired life, and seemed to torment me. When I kissed her and sent her away, for myself, I seemed in a manner to lose her. But this part of Robbie seemed not to have left. And it belonged to you—almost like her spirit! I tried to kill the thought by dinner, by putting my little boy to bed; doing little hum-drum duties after.

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"There was some business or other to keep Bax from me, our usual hour. He had accounts to make out, I think."

Abruptly she reached it toward him, smiling tremulously the while:

"Will you take it? There are some orders it does no harm to forget."

"I should like to read it," Claude answered. "When does the train leave, did you say?"

"I did not say," returned Mrs. Bax, yet radiantly delighted at his understanding, as women never fail to be over men, under whatever circumstances.

He tried to smile, but failed in the doing.

She reached out her hand, and over it he said, humbly:

"There are no thanks for such acts as these."

"Oh, yes!" she cried, with her variable face quite alight now. "There are such debts that we seem to owe each other, but which are more payable to the world. There are many of them, you'll find out. It is my pleasure to pay mine to one like you, who won't forget it."

The earnestness dropped like a mask again. She edged off as though to leave him, and, out of the greater gloom she stood in, said:

"Mr. Garnet, it is sometimes permitted to the very young, such as you and Robbie, to stumble across the only secret in life worth having.

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There are no qualifiers to it like real, true, or great; it is simply the *only* possible thing of its kind. Generally we can't mistake it. It is domestic happiness." Her voice got deeper. It seemed almost solemn.

"Many things appear to be satisfactory, — fame, gold, vanity, any visible success. But this thing which is invisible to us — just at first — is the only truth, the only thing steadfast, the only eternal satisfaction in God's great world."

She was thinking of her child and her husband, he felt, yet with still deeper passion, she disabused him eloquently:

"I am thinking of my little boy who died. God cannot take him from me. It is the divinity all share with him — dead, living, human, out-cast, divine, the breath once given."

Unexpectedly she smiled again. These humors were deliciously human, exquisitely profound.

"I think I *invented* that idea; I am so proud of it. At least Bax says so, when he wants to amuse himself. I am going now.' A man would have said this to you lots better — more simply; — just — 'Be sure — then hold on,' perhaps —"

They looked into each other's eyes. Many things seemed to balance, all undetermined, when the look was closed.

"I must see you home," said Claude.

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She cried: "Nonsense! in my *ain countree*, and after all my candor!"

He took her obediently to the door, she making some flippant little remarks, well like Robbie, on her own bravery in having entered, unaided, such a short time before. Parting, they did not say farewell. She just went off down the narrow, unilluminated path. From a distance her voice came to him:

"The train leaves at 11:40. It is 10 now."

In the after silence, he went in toward the office, mechanically. He did not re-seat himself, but, standing, read Robbie's letter. The incandescent light was hung low, and he had to stoop a little. Now and again, in a way he had in business, he read a phrase, or even a sentence, aloud, so as to grasp it better; yet without really knowing he did so.

Otherwise, all was very still. The letter commenced:

"Claude, when you read this letter, I will be far, far away where your earnest eyes, your helpful hand, your forgiving spirit will — one or the other — be unable to reach or influence my impulses, selfish as they have ever been.

". . . Except, my sister tells me, the one which brought this change into my life. But I do not care to dwell too much on that, lest, — I am so superstitious, — it might affect my determination. We are under a ro-

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mantic glamour, so I am going back to the old, vapid life which I never knew was vapid, until I chanced to encounter such earnestness, such truth, and purpose as yours, Rel's, Bax's, — even this funny, big, uninhabited land's.

“If you think this step is not worthy of me, stop and think. It is the self you do not know which is real! — the self which prefers superficialities, ball-rooms, parlors, — which only awakens to its realer womanhood very occasionally, with a start, perhaps when some baby kisses me.

“Claude, Claude, Claude, I am writing like a good woman, like Rel now. I am making you feel sorry, love me.

“I don't deserve it. And, if you won't see how things are, my dear, why, take my word for it. The good is your influence, which I can't shake off just yet; the desires leading me from you are the lasting ones, I am sure.

“I can't tell you how I have loved the world, endured the hideous monotony, the boring unintellectuality of riches, because of their environment. It deadens one's heart, and I felt it; so, when Rel's little baby died, I got to feeling human, and burdened myself with great resolutions, and came.

“You know the endless tug of war since. Such duties as are imposed by a life like this starve every sense of luxury we have.

“Only a week ago I was making fun of the old life to you, of the young people who spend evening after evening like little thoughtless children at play, laughing over nothing, and for hours at a time; flirting, de-

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stroying every barrier between the occasional and the continual, the rare personality and the gross one, the irreverent and the sacred, love and ennui.

"Yet I am going back to this. It may not seem the same for a while, then I will make up my mind to it.

"Claude, had you come in the older days, had we met in a ball-room, courted in some stupid, gewgaw-decked parlor, been surprised into a tame sort of acknowledgment and proposal, why, I should have married you after buying a big trousseau, and every one would have said, 'how lucky!'

"But, Claude, Claude, you have lured me from my old tradition under this great deceptive sky. It is like church; it is not neutral; it is so just, so inexorable, so far away —

"I cannot reach it. You can't turn a butterfly into an ant.

"Claude, if I asked you to go away, would you? — back to the cities, to comfort, to conventional things. You cannot answer. I could not for you for a long, long time. Then it was, 'No.'

"And that is my answer — the word you say yourself. If it had been anything else, I should not have respected you, as I do in separation; for, to be different, not dutiful, however tender, would not be yourself.

"If I stayed, I should grow tired of the very nobleness I married; of all the spiritual scaffolding marriage with you would create —"

It grew miserably tired toward the end, like a little battle lost on the very paper, and because

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the strength put in the struggle was that of a child.

Understanding her as he did, all the pity in his nature went out to the failure of her own self-conception. He felt the truth of Mrs. Bax's words, "Be sure — then hold on."

It was a step aside; the little difference at first between paths; a difficulty in finding the second opportunity again; the almost appalling assurance that the vital crisis of his happiness had arrived.

He pulled out his watch and looked at it. He was going to save her from herself, from the little, false, prim, conventional thing she must have been in Chicago. Between the lines in her letter was a vague trailing something, like the scent of flowers pressed between them, by which he had become strengthened to act.

Now only time lay between him and a reversal of her decision. He felt his power over Fate, yet with dim, superstitious apologies to Fate in the strong joy of triumph. There became a pleasurable madness in the close race he would have for her surrender. He went out and groped in the little made-up stable. When his hand touched the horse's rope, he felt all the delirium of conquest, before he had even started.

So hope stands with us, when we are twenty-four.

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The little horse, which had been one of Wef-fold's, instinctively chose a circuitous path out of town. He gave up to her. Then, almost before he knew it, they struck the great team road out past the cemetery toward Short's. As he looked back on the outskirts of the little settlement, some lights went out, as if by magic. They were the retail stores behind him. By this, he knew that it was ten o'clock.

At first, he did not doubt his ability to reach her before the train. Then, as ground became heavier beneath him, he got a desperate idea of the odds against him. He was riding against a railroad train.

The little mare he rode was in good condition. Whenever he got so far as blaming her, he swept the boyishness beneath him, and set his lips more justly, and rode on — may be bending a little lower, distressedly. In New York it would have been a magnificent night. Here it was like many others, — a dark which made one forget the faults of the day, and love all nature better; a soft, reaching dark, some quality like a woman's voice in it, capable of finding the human heart and causing it to throb; a joyous darkness.

Nothing violent occurred. It was merely a pressing onward, monotonous as a movement, yet enormous as a risk. Sometimes the land was very plain, like a park at night, dotted

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here and there, as it was, by the sturdy cacti. Now and again, a cow loomed up or ran off.

The idea of the greatness of his adversary increased. He felt weak, incapable of winning.

Then the necessity of his success became tormenting as the very fires of hell. Why had he pondered, or wasted this moment? He could have gone without reading her letter, could have guessed. He had never felt so overpowered, so utterly forceless before.

In stray, less physical, spells, he promised noble things to the world, if Robbie had not already left. She seemed lost to him by that one issue. There was the thought strong within him that once parted, they would never be the same again. Her little fair, cool, sweet self became almost visible then ; the little, *blasé*, worldly glimpses now and again of that old self, irresistibly quaint for all they were so disturbing ; then the long times when she was the most natural creature human nature had yet produced.

If she left him, went back to her old ways now, she would be irreclaimable, he felt. In a year — two, if he saw her, she would have a hundred society platitudes when they met, like the women at home with whom he was more or less familiar. Mrs. Ralph was that sort. She

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was in an armor socially, so to say. She never moved without it. She suffered affliction, met joys, entered every phase of human emotion, with much the same smile and tear.

He shuddered. The woman he wanted to go through life with him became far off and sacred. He grew worshipful, and was not able to think the long, domestic, tranquil happiness out. They would grow — loving, old together. He was to save her heart for a home, for some goodly, noble, inspiring service.

The other Robbie would marry a Possibility — rich, never poor — but young or old, he did not care. Years and years after, when the old things were dead to her, she would boast of having jilted him. He saw her, still cold, still prim, Tennyson's evolutionized woman :

“ With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.”

His throat choked, and he thought no longer.

One half hour later, a tired horse made for the dark cluster of houses people have designated as Short's. The rider was in no condition to hear or see. It seemed as if a surging were in his ears, so great it blinded, too. The last yards before him were pierced in almost mortal fashion by a locomotive's shrill scream.

Claude fell on to his feet at the sound, before

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the faithful beast even halted. He was almost gasping. He did not know which way the train was bent, what that shrill scream signalled ; but, when he finally stepped on to the platform, he saw that it had already departed for the East.

MR. AND MRS. BOSTON JIM

AFTER Mrs. Jim had made a pile of money, cooking and serving "grub" (as Boston still fondly called it) out at some unearthly railroad station in Arizona, she went home to sort of "whoop it up" herself, in frontiers' language.

This was in a little manufacturing town not a thousand miles from Boston. Of course, she did not go with the unimpeachably élite; principally, if I may tell it, because she did not feel quite at home with them, but amongst the dear old class from which Boston Jim had won her years and years before, when he was a sort of steward on one of the great Atlantic ships, and she had been a little fresh-faced hand at the mill.

"What exquis't' manners Mr. Jim had in them days," the ladies even yet said to her at many an afternoon tea.

But this is going apart from my story, and throwing in little extras, as it were.

For it was only of Mrs. Jim's story over the New England teacups that I care to tell. She always wore a great-flowered silk, such as

Mr. and Mrs. Boston Jim

people used to wear in the fifties; and I always admired it in her, as it was conservatism of a pronounced sort. She had seen the great city ladies clad just so when she was a wee little girl, and it had been ever the epitome of all joy to her, having wealth enough to live up to the taste.

So this is the way that she will finish off for me; as she was indisputable eye-witness to what befell the little romance checked so unceremoniously in my last.

"Yes," she would commence on these occasions, "we was allays able to keep our heads above water, Jemmie and me, but afer the kind ax of the young Superintendent Garnet, as you may have heard of him, why, luck went high. Now Jem —"

After the change in their circumstances, she had felt Jim was not adequate enough, as it were, to suit their pocket, so she had commenced to call this nervous, rustling sharer of her joys Jemmie, even James, only he had drawn the line at that, just as he had at other ear-marks of feminine tyranny.

"Y' kin call me James, if you want," he told her, good-natured as a certain amount of moderate success had made him, "but I'll be blowed, Maria, 'f I don't plum forgit to turn my head jes' like other things w' which I ain't familer. Like

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when I was a young cuss a-courtin' you, m' dear, I used to enjoy wearing kid gloves of a evening. Whereas now, having founded out the use of my hands, Maria, I'd a rip 'em wide, first go-to-meeting, same as a squaw would corsets."

Then Mrs. Boston Jim would half "holler," as if she were shocked completely; but she let the matter drop after a while.

What a fool of a historian I am after all; for, unless I get right down to business, why, it's hard to come around to the point. Well, this is it in a nut-shell.

Boston Jim and his proud lady were just out for anything "them days" in the way of an honest living. (We have often gotten him, good old fellow, off to the side, and learned this.) So they took a little place which seemed open to catch the intermittent travel between Hope ("every one knew Hope mine — Dick Garnet 'n 'cettery") and the outside world. "Landed in Short's, stayed there five or so years afore start was a-given us. Used to cook, and serve, and stew" (which was quite a figurative use of it) themselves.

"Stage came in from Hope early, say five or five-thirty, to catch the East Bound, which left at eleven-forty, leaving party five or some sich hours to wait around. It meant trade to us. Generally caught a meal or so."

Mr. and Mrs. Boston Jim

Now the tellable part of it "b'longs" to Mrs. Jim :

"One day, about the same time as usual, stage drove into town. One gal was in it besides the driver, who was a new driver."

The manufacturing town learned all these details, and if Mrs. Jim should have chanced to be telling it to some new-flowered silk lady, and omitted such a detail as this, why, ten to one, some one who had heard the story would say :

"And, Mis' Shepard, wasn't it a *new* driver, or did I misunderstand you, them days?"

And Mrs. Jim would say, "Lor', yes, how forgetful," and tell all about Shorty, the Major's ingratitude to him, and the run-down politician from Phoenix all over again.

"The gal who got off the stage, Jem and I recognized as a pretty little creature, who had gone through to the mining settlement some months before. Afterwards, we had heard that she was one of the Weffolds by marriage — sister to her as had married young Bax Weffold, old Carl's son.

"She was a funny, clean sort of little thing, and looked as if she had been crying. She seemed homesick-looking, and came up to me and said:

" 'May I go into the kitchen with you?' "

(All the Massachusetts middle-class ladies used to shake their heads over this, and say, very

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seriously, I assure you, "That was queer at the start.")

"But after going into the kitchen, she just hugged up to the stove and said :

"'Will you let me stay here and keep warm, so I won't *think*,' — for all the day was like summer outside 'em! Wal, she sat down quiet-like in a corner, and watched me moving here and there. And once she wanted f'r to help me, but I saw how white and silly-like her hands were, and was that uncomfortable. And once, when it was getting a wee bit dark outside, and a freight train whistled by in the darkness, the young thing rose from her corner, as if she had been shot out of a cannon, then smiled, as if she knew that she had been silly, and without another word of warning, fainted, genteel-like, away."

This was most interesting, for there is only one thing more than a faint which ladies like to hear about under ordinary circumstances, — that is, the cause.

"Boston and me then had a quarrel over a-bringin' her to. Jim, he prescribed a dipper of water, and I, a little whiskey, which pleased the young lady mightily afterward; as she said that she could never endure water under such circumstances, and so generously administered. It made one so *uncomfortable*!"

After these very sensible, highly commendable

Mr. and Mrs. Boston Jim

opinions, she lay over on Mrs. Boston Jim's bosom, and cried as if her heart would break.

She told Mrs. Jim that she was very unhappy leaving her *sister*. (Of course, this was very sad.)

Well, before the time for the train to come, she began to act more natural. She even presented Mrs. Jim with a breastpin (brooch, the honest creature calls it) which was displayed religiously to all the town ladies also. Mrs. Jim did not want to take it, and fought with the poor young lady for full a quarter of an hour about it afterwards.

The remarks exchanged on this occasion were these :

Mrs. Jim, winking : " You don 't want to give away now what some fine gentleman may 've give you."

The young girl said that it really did n't matter, as he was n't The young gentleman. Indeed, she had four or five brooches in her own little room in Chicago that she could easily give Mrs. Jim now under the same conditions — graduation folly.

At eleven-forty they went out on the platform. Her trunk was there. She had a box or so, and a grip extra. She had her ticket all bought also — sleeper-accommodation, and all. She was quite calm now and very silent.

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Once she said: "Is the train on time?" and some one pointed it out to her, the baggage-man, no doubt, who was bustling about quite near them, here and there. It was creeping along the track far above them. It was like a huge, noiseless, approaching monster!

Then it slid past them, lessening its speed, until it stopped. She was the only passenger to board. The men forward managed their own affairs and her trunk, while, back where they were, a big smiling porter stepped down to assist her in. He took her hand-luggage from her affably; then he said: "This way, missus, missus!"

Still the young lady did not stir. An important man with a cap came out and yelled out in the darkness, then he reached upward and pulled a rope.

A second later Mrs. Jim was standing alone on the platform with the girl.

The train had gone on without her.

Then it was that Mr. Garnet, the young lady's husband-who-was-to-be, appeared. She herself was so wrathful just then at Boston Jim, she was unmindful of what passed around her, so to speak. Boston Jim was a-walking before them both, and a-swearing, quiet-like, to himself. Mrs. Jim surmised that it was about the young lady, and was trying to kick him, so she wouldn't hear.

Just then, a shadow loomed up before them

Mr. and Mrs. Boston Jim

all. It was young Mr. Garnet. The girl gave a start, like a little silly girl as had run away from school and been caught. Afore a word could be said, the young superintendent reached out and took hold of her —

Then she and Boston Jim walked on. When she turned around next second, “to see as everything was all right, the young couple had stopped staring at each other, and was a-kissing, solemn-like, mind you, —afore the Whole Living World!”

Mrs. Jim never failed to accomplish this magnificent hyperbole on Short’s.

About three weeks later an architect or contractor fellow came a-visiting them from the mine. He said he was under orders from one of the brothers there to erect a hotel on the most likely site around. They went in with long faces, which grew more and more so as their rival grew in beauty day by day. It was to be called the “Boston Royal,” and no telling what Boston Jim would have done (that “riled ” was he) had not a kind, gentlemanly, little note arrived the same day, — the name was pencilled in it, — asking them to run it for him, rent and findings free; a little card being tacked on to the official communication bearing these words, “same as if ’t was a little silver spoon was presented”:

Compliments,

MR. AND MRS. CLAUDE GARNET.

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The same name figures in magazine articles, at intervals, under "The Age of Romance not yet over!" "Millionaire's Wives;" "The Human Life of our Society Women," etc., etc. Mrs. Jim had her picture, in fact, and all the tea-drinking ladies of that manufacturing town were quite familiar with it, a sort of direct, kind, clean, little face, with an humbler expression on it than Chicago had been able to produce; a rather stately little coiffure, and little square-cut neck to its dress.

Hardly great, unless one knew.

In fact, a part of the illustrious family Mrs. Jim had been known to visit the last time she was in New York. Robbie and Claude had insisted she call and take dinner with them, but, by some miscalculation, the very day Mrs. Jim arrived, they were out of town, so it was Mrs. Dick who entertained them. It was the most marvellous house, and she the most marvellous woman, who seemed perfectly at home in it, yet perfectly at home with them, and very kind to every one around her.

Then at dinner, Mr. Dick, who had grown so middle-aged in appearance that one never knew whether it was from happiness or from fat, set about talking to Boston Jim. That was the first stage of conquest. The second, when he proceeded to "draw Mr. Jim out," as he explained

Mr. and Mrs. Boston Jim

to Mrs. Dick later, seeing she was a trifle huffed.

And when Mr. Jim felt right at home, he told Mr. Dick the women-folks was too much for him, and he could see Maria was a-dying of fright now, lest he do something to disgrace her. Nothing seemed to have pleased Mr. Dick so for years. He laughed so at it, and said they must shake hands on it, as his wife was that way with him.

Mrs. Dick was looking down at her plate and trying to ignore him, but presently her lips parted in a frosty little smile.

But, when they went on to say they (neither Boston Jim nor Mr. Dick) could ever quite enjoy the *coat* atmosphere and its absolute necessity in the metropolis; and Boston Jim confided about his name, and Mrs. Jim's wanting to change it, why, Mrs. Dick got to her feet, old Mrs. Garnet and Mrs. Jim following her, leaving the two jolly men together over their wine and their walnuts; just as had been the manner, Mrs. Jim remembered, of the fine English ladies in the novels of her youth.

And the three women were not a bit strange alone. They talked about children and Mexican embroidery, and all manner of interesting things, and old Mrs. Garnet, mother of these famous boys, told little things about them, and what a good

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baby Mr. Claude had been, just as the village women might have done.

Then later, when the men didn't come, forgetting all false things like caste, they all tiptoed out together. The table was quite empty now, except for several boxes of cigars scattered here and there on it. Mr. Dick was still shaking all over with laughter, and Mr. Jim was looking rather sheepish, yet very proud. It looked very funny, especially when Mr. Dick's hand went up, as if he were afraid to go any further.

"You must not say any more," he declared, in his pauses. "You will strangle me."

Then Mrs. Jim seemed to fathom that Boston had been telling about his kid gloves, and the squaw's ripping open her corsets all over again.

ABOUT A "CLUB"

ON the same evening all this had occurred to Claude, Simmons wandered in late to the wife of his bosom. She was mending the trousers of their youngest boy. He was rather flushed that night, was Simmons, and looked larger, heavier than ever, as if there were less animal energy to his movements. This was solved by a very simple explanation. He had been dampening his buoyancy, so to speak, with poor whiskey, the kind country keepers make immense profits on.

Throughout the town there was just such a tendency that August, when the great mill was so long shut down. It was just after the beginning of the month before this, that Claude had acknowledged he was defeated. There was no sign of water on his place. The men had bored until it became ridiculous to do so any longer. Then he had called a halt of all proceedings in simple, manly, terse terms.

He had gone into the great power-rooms where they were congregated, and said:

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"You have all seen how the force of unfortunate circumstances compels us to take the step we do to-day; so I will not explain it to you. All labor in the mine and mill will be suspended for a time.

"In turning you adrift this way, I want to say I have tried to do the best I was able, by and for you all" — deep gruff murmurs of approval greeted this.

"Yet, in looking back, I see places where I might have acted even more disinterestedly of my own thoughts. So it will not be entirely wasted — such a period of reflection as this."

There was a blank, undecided result now.

"Let us trust the second opportunity will come soon. I have telegraphed to my brother, and, if he can suggest any form of negotiation I have not thought of, the difficulty will soon be removed."

The earnest young voice stimulated them to purer moral courage for the time. They were looking up at him, following, grasping, absorbing his thoughts, as they came. None felt very hard toward any one else just then. They thought he was n't such a bad un for a rich cove, while his following words won them into loud, ringing hurrahs.

"There is a month's pay awaiting you all in the office. There is only one word more to say;

About a "Club"

the moment we cease our relationship as man and employer, I 'want you to feel that in any need whatsoever, I have supplied a nearer one to you. It is one ever grateful for the faithful part you have played in our family fortunes — that of friend."

He bowed. His dark eyes fell here and there amongst them — kind, straightforward, unostentatious.

Then they all filed out.

Mrs. Simmons was a tall, blonde, lazy woman who had been a tall, blonde, phlegmatic girl. She did not have many worries nor any violent interruptions in her placid affections, but she had had one great fear stare her in the face once, and she frittered a great many days away in hopeless anxiety about it. Her appetite was even impaired during the period.

She so dreaded growing stout.

Simmons said this was a fool idea, as every one grew stout after thirty ; but, as he did n't expect any but fool ideas from her, he did not worry much either, after all.

She set great store by figure, so this had bothered her a great deal until she came to Arizona, where she remained reduced and happy. Otherwise, she could not have lived in the place. She was not a particularly brilliant woman, but she used to dream quite imaginative things some-

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times. After hours thinking over these things, she used to say to Simmons, that she would feel like Heaven if she were driving in a carriage up Fifth Avenue with the children, all dressed lovely, going to take dinner at Mrs. Dick Garnet's. (Every one took his or her children when they went to dinner at Mrs. Dick's.) She, Mrs. Simmons, did hope the children would behave, and not crush their clothes (quite as if they were already started !), and she would wear a big hat with plumes. It was too bad poor Mrs. Dick Garnet had n't more social push, had such poor taste in spending money. She thought from all Simmons had told her of his visit to them, that gilt furniture with rich velvet trimmings was more suitable to their income than the furniture with which Mrs. Dick had supplied her mansion.

In fact, it occurred distantly to Mrs. Simmons that, in time, since Mr. Dick and Simmons had gone to school together, she would meet Mrs. Edward and Mrs. Ralph. This was the dizzyest height that she ever attained in her rambles. It was universally reported before a gown was barely out in Paris, that Mrs. Edward had its identical counterpart on her back. Mrs. Simmons thought she and these two ladies would get on capitally.

It was a cosy-enough little room that Simmons intruded upon that evening, — rather old-

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fashioned ; the usual, worn, country carpet ; old-style parlor chairs ; centre-table and lamp on it, with a few awry pictures about the walls.

They had brought all the furniture with them from her mother's village home East. Simmons sank into an immense grandfather's chair near her, and sat staring at the work she was doing, not as if it fascinated him, but as if it focussed thought better for him than anything else.

"There's a damned fellow in town — I can't understand," he remarked after a while.

Mrs. Simmons turned a corner of her patch, while she said, with quite a degree of coquetry to it :

"My market is made, dear. You can't expect me to take the same interest in fellows I did once."

They often said things like this to each other, Simmons's star compliment being that she must stop claiming Roland (their eldest son) soon ; he was getting to look too old for her to mother.

Simmons did not reply to this, but stared at the pants of his offspring.

"What did he do, dear?" the wife asked.

"Why, he took a risk," Simmons snapped ; but being a faithful wife to him, she felt the snap was not in her direction, so she simply raised her blonde eyebrows inquisitively.

Simmons then got up and walked all around

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the little room, like a caged giant. His head nearly touched the papered ceiling.

"When a person takes risks," he said, putting his thumbs in the sleeves of his vest and expanding, "there is always a doubt aroused in one's mind as to whether he's a fool, or dead sure of his game."

"May be neither," said Mrs. Simmons, as if she were arguing it attentively.

"What then?" inquired her husband.

"Why, just talking to hear himself, to be sure, as so many men do, dear, as you know," returned his partner.

He said, "Pshaw!" and rumbled his great head of curly hair now.

"How is the club getting on, dear?" asked Mrs. Simmons, wondering why one knee had worn through before the other. Simmons had told her the citizens of the community had organized a club of defence of their interests, lately. It kept him out, up late and very busy. He said such a thing was necessary, and was of the vigilance idea; though the name was rather extreme, as yet. Only every one was getting very tired of the way the Weffolds were acting, and thought steps ought to be taken in the direction at once.

She said on these occasions, when he told all this to her:

"Indeed *she* did, too; and the Weffolds were

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rather a strange family any way one looked at them, did n't he think? Mrs. Weffold had such unlady-like, almost *heathen* ideas on the raising of children. Evidently her husband had been reared like that, too, — never sent little Donald to Sunday-school."

(She did n't know his name was Johann Carl.)

"Mrs. Weffold even thought it quite *clever* when her little son described his recollection of one attendance at the Sabbath juvenile meeting by 'he wis' that he never did go to that Sunny cool place — *singer* so long and noisy.'

"She hoped Simmons was glad *his* children did not behave like that, and knew the difference between a noise which was so pleasing to God and that child's hermit-like habits."

(Simmons had laughed in the midst of her story, when she came to poor little Don's heathenism, so she had supplemented the rest.)

To-night he entered into no long-winded preamble with her very feminine view of things.

He said: "When we were in the saloon this evening, everything was going nicely, when that old hanger-on of a farm-hand who has been old Weffold's man Friday so long, came in and made a mess of it all."

"Oh, how dreadful!" she cried, as if it were a nice bonnet given a wrong touch to; "spoiled your nice meeting; and what did you do, dear?"

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“Why, what could we do?” said Simmons. “There is nothing one can do with an old fool like that, whining around one. We had just concluded to all start down in a body to-morrow, — now, don’t get frightened, my love, merely to see the matter through with those rascals, as it were — when in trundled this old fellow. We did not mind him at all, like fools; as since the stage was taken from him, why, it was pretty generally known he and old Weffold had n’t been on very lover-like terms. So we had almost forgotten his existence, when he up and flew into a towering rage, and called us all ‘snakes,’ and other unfriendly epithets of that nature.

“Well, that would n’t have amounted to anything; but some fellow who had had more than was good for him (in fact, Shorty was pretty far gone himself) called him a coward, said he was afraid to join the crowd. Well, we thought there’d be the devil to pay after that little set-to, but it was here the old drunken fool made an ass of himself. He staggered over and laid his revolver on the bar, where every man could see it, and said, he’d go to-morrow with us, and, if we proved Bax Weffold all we claimed, he’d put him out with one shot of that same weapon.”

Mrs. Simmons said: “Dear me, who would think any one could be so ungrateful!”

Then Simmons saw all his rhetoric had been

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wasted, so he stretched out and made as if he were going to sleep. He was in no condition to have much activity to his conscience. Mrs. Simmons kept on patching. Presently, without looking up at his huge, indolent form, she said :

"How did the club happen to meet in a saloon, dear? Was n't there any other place for them?" As Simmons did not respond, she imagined he had fallen asleep, poor darling! so she finished her last stitches, quite tranquilly.

THE DAY

IT was early morning. Men rode in from here and there. Formerly they had crept out of houses, — unwashed, uncouth, almost eternally impotent, if I may use the term. That is, weak without union.

Some had awakened eager, restless, wondering, alert; some, quiet, compliant merely; others, surly, snappish, ready to treat their hearth, their dog, and their women alike, with a kick or oath.

It was very funny. I wonder if all riots have been the same; whether this husband and father, sweetheart and brother phase of Arizonian evolution was not unconsciously imitative. One fellow jested with his baby. He had married a Mexican, and she had borne a little, fair, sweet girl to him. It crept around the kitchen now. In his coarse wooden chair, environed by mere bare implements for the proper sustenance of human life, this father, — young, warm-blooded yesterday against oppression, eager in the support of justice, — I say, his desires, his pulses, his fine, just senses all grew cold.

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There seemed no joy in the fray of the world, yet he did not say it so finely. He simply sat, dull and heavy, and watched his baby. Then he fed it out of his own dish, and, going, he did not kiss it, but pushed back his chair and went out, not daring to think for himself, yet fiercely unsatisfied, did he know it, of man's thought for him.

And the throne on which justice sits is of this clay — not stone at all, my friends.

On the outskirts of the town, they gathered — never one — first two or three, so abruptly and in such unaccountable sympathy of motion as to produce the impression that they had watched and waited so as to make no man first.

One more — three — two now — five — seven —

When there were seventy-five, all fell to quarrelling, because one Doe brought word from a Roe that the old gun-wound in his leg was a-hurting and would keep him home. It was like a girl's excuse to a party, and the rage within them was fanned to a sudden blaze. They cursed at each other. And any who had had scruples, doubts about the real state of their feelings, felt powerfully sure of their own deliberation now.

The great mill lay across from them, up on the side of the hill. The young master of it all,

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Jack the Giant Killer, was safe for once. They were safe from his meddling, his infernal interfering with its deadly, persistent Sunday-schoolness. They meant no harm to him. Some day, — tomorrow, next day or week, perhaps, he would be Claude Garnet, capitalist, again their employer. Now he was merely an impotent young moralist ; they had Simmons' word for it. It had been accomplished with such ease and finish as only a gentleman like him could furnish the occasion.

Last night, during Claude Garnet's vigil, Simmons, who had the mill key also, was to have turned the key in the lock of the room which held the young superintendent. This had been done.

You are not to underestimate Simmons in this instance. What he had done was in the manner of mischief, but in the name of ambition. He had risked one good place in life — every favor with it — for the final outwitting of the Weffolds, father and son. He had false notions of the result of this move. The mine was to become an unlimited power by it. Claude's indisputableness as a millionaire, his inefficacy as mining superintendent ; they were to be demonstrated, too. But his own vague, enormous profit by it, that was paramount.

As this gathering of men increased near the north of the town, a child sat alongside an adja-

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cent cactus. He had deep-brown, dusty little feet, half turned underneath him, ragged well-worn overalls, and a freckled, sunburnt little face from which he could pull little dried pieces of pure, thin, Scotch skin without much consequent inconvenience. He did not seem to be noticing anybody, but sat there, half hugging his little legs, and looking down at the ground in a dully negative, more than timid, way. Little children who are not great friends with enjoyment often look like this. Yet, from time to time, he gave a furtive, swift little glance around him.

Once, when no one seemed to be looking, this child climbed with one swift motion to his feet, and put off toward the town beyond. He lost his small scrap of breath as he ran. A man amongst the crowd happened to see the drab-clad little figure scurrying, as if it were frightened, so, all to himself, he smiled.

Dirty skinned, with sun-bleached hair and straight little Scotch gaze, the child ran on. The houses were built on the ground, off irregular streets, and it was only a part of his run when it terminated almost in the arms of a dour figure which was ironing that early on an improvised board.

Mrs. Fitzsimmons laid down her iron, and faced her son. He stood stark-still after his entrance. It was a sort of violent ending to his run.

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"I think Mester Bax is to be kilt," he said, letting his mouth stay open.

"Off wi' ye," the mother returned. "What mean ye?"

"The men," returned the little fellow, "every man in town near, even Shorty, all a-standing over by the little graves of the men wh' died, a-whooping it up."

With that term a new life came to him :

"They are a-whooping it up now," he said. "After they go a-whooping it up, mither, why they are to kill Bax Weffold, not old Maj'r Weffold. *Mees* Bax was allays good to me, mither, even when I asked her every five minutes, thinking it an hour. Working wi' Mr. Garnet made me unnerstan' that was being a baby, like lil' Marj're."

She did not know what it would lead to.

"Mither, is there no one to stop them? *Mees* Bax we' gude to me!"

She caught a sort of quick breath, and her eyes glistened.

"There are nothing ye can do, my son. God, he have made this quarrel between them, man and men, and the lamb will be asked as sacr'fice, mark me, mark me!" she returned.

He did not understand it.

"Can't nothing be did to stop them? *Mees* Bax we' gude to me," he said.

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"There is the constable could be told," said the woman.

The little figure gave a sudden turn before the mind got active. There was a gleam of great hope in the motion, then he was looking at her hopelessly, the heart beating hard and the mouth open.

"The constable no can help us," he cried; "he was wi' them, too, y' see!"

The face had meant nothing to him then, now he suddenly remembered.

The woman looked at her little boy. He was choking up bravely, keeping down tears that seemed like Marj're's.

"There is Mr. Garnet will help 'em," he said at last.

"Mr. Garnet no is home," she returned with helpless following of her child.

"But I will find him," said Robert. His little voice broke in places, courageously. "An' he will be glad, mither, and he will take his gun and go down to Weffold and kill the men who are hating Mrs. Bax."

"Go then, my boy," the poor thing exhorted nobly. He was great blessings to her just then. "Go and find Mr. Claude, and say this to him: 'Mither says *hurry*, for *God's* sake!' They won't dare disobey Mr. Claude."

Then a thought came to her.

She caught hold of his arm as he turned, and

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faced him, so she saw the freckled, peeling, sun-burnt little face.

"There be Tommy Knockers up at the mine," she said, in a whisper. It was the only thing in life she was afraid of, these miner ghaists who worked and knocked and whistled, and loaded one car every evening, laughing as it rattled off from their eerie fingers. Since the mine was abandoned, many stories had spread about this, some even saying the ghaists worked so well that Mr. Claude had been able to send a load of ore into the cars already.

Mother and son, both, were pale. They looked at each other. Suddenly her grasp relaxed. The next moment she and her fear were alone. The child ran swiftly. He was not thinking of anything, — end or reward or manner — only deliverance. He went circling around some squatty huts. He passed the great bed of slag, dry, cracked, hard, as it lay with the water evaporated from it. He reached the long circling path to the top of the hill, indeed it was a mountain. He ran up it, bending low, thinking of nothing but the cookies Mees Bax had been so lavish in giving him, covered with white and then with chocolate figures. He could not run as he ascended, but trotted like a tired colt. It was really a slower process than walking. He seemed to slip back.

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Then from the crown of the hill, he caught sight of Weffold's. A man and a horse were moving across it, small, like a rabbit on a plain. He almost cried out, because the last path seemed so high ; he was so tired ; and that man was Mester Bax.

But the little child kept on manfully. He ran through the great empty rooms, until he came to the safe room where he'd often taken Mr. Claude his meals. It was off his office. As the child approached it, he called Claude shrilly :

" Mr. Claude, Mr. Garnet, Mr. Claude ! " then, " Mr. Claude Garnet ! "

The door was shut, locked. When he found this out, he commenced pounding on it with his little fists. He became strong as a hero, and persistent as Marj're. After utter, prolonged utter silence, he went off and got a stick and propped it against the wall, and climbed and slipped back and climbed, slipping, until he reached the little ridge the transom opened on. Still he was not tall enough ; so he tussled, struggling, panting, to draw himself up to look in. — The room was empty ! Poor little maniac, it was the greatest shock of his life. The desk stood there just as Claude had left it, even unto the incandescent light which he had left burning. The books lay about, as if they were waiting to be closed. The chair was half-around, as if he had

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just turned to get out of it. But there was no sight or sound of life.

Robert Fitzsimmons dropped heavily to the floor on his feet. It was a long way. They were very sore, and it hurt him. Suddenly, as if he could stand no more unkindness, he crouched down, caught hold of each one of them, and began to cry, all alone except for echo.

By seven, the men who were to dispense justice had drunk a great deal. The blood ran hot through them. A great thirst parched their throats, and some thought it was the drought; some, the cruelty of their oppression; while the more unconsciously honest, simply wanted another drink. So they bore on to Weffold's.

The place lay calm in the early day. It was almost golden. Afar off waved the Maj'r's grain; the green young trees right around the house were bearing first fruit, and the great pond, with its countless ducks, lay serene before the coveters.

A madness possessed them at the simple sight. Yet a little child became distinct from the rough attempt at art-rocks as they approached, and sat looking at them, with shaded, wondering, surpassingly angelic eyes. He was used to great herds of cattle, to detaching some little calf or yearling from a great multitude of others, purely

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in his affections (if I may so speak); used to loving this one or that one, and keeping it fixed, separate, well pondered over, in his quaint little mind.

He detached Shorty now. He saw them all; but when he really found Shorty, impulsively he clapped his hands. And then he sat with them clasped, as the men came on toward him.

He was wondering why Shorty did not smile at him.

On a little knoll by the west side of the dwelling the invaders saw a man standing, swinging an ax. As they came nearer, he stopped his chopping, and walked forward a little. The large hat he usually wore, was off. By this, the almost Apache stillness of head, with deep-set, watching eyes, was accentuated more than words can say. It was a silhouette of the hopeless, dry, cruel Territory in person. His lips curved in the endless smile of the sky which had refused water to them.

Silence was for a moment unbroken. Then his soft, slow, soothing speech dropped into their ears like poison.

"Gentlemen," it said, "what ken I do for you?"

The man who was to have made the speech could not open his mouth to answer; so dignity was lost from that moment. An old man

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amongst them began to yell in inarticulate rage, as a little child would have. He dismounted and stepped forward a foot or so. Then one could recognize him. He was an old enemy of the Maj'r's, poor as dirt; a vagrant half, but they had fought in the Mexican war together. They had hated each other even then; and years of avarice and affluence on the one side, of constant failure and disappointment and unsatisfied demands on the other, had made the antagonism tough as the root of some gnarled old tree.

He raised his fist and shook it in blind, mad wrath, without a vestige of the dignity of age in it, the action detracting meanwhile from a certain stateliness of rhetoric.

"John Weffold!" he shrieked, anglicizing the name unnaturally, "John Weffold, I neither fear ye nor love ye! Do your worst."

The old man whom life had blessed with riches controlled himself with a giant effort. One could see the old political suavity die the death as one watched him, hounded, bereft, unmagnetic at last.

He squared his bent old shoulders.

"Gentle-men," he commenced, dwelling on the parts of it, "will you allow me to arm myself?"

The vitality of the grievance swept suddenly into these two old men.

They stood glaring like couchant tigers, bitter

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hate in form, lip, eye. Then, as they stood so, face to face, their quarrel just with cause at last, in this Dèvil's land without law or order, the old vagrant, still watching, suddenly raised his gun.

In another second the glistening ax went up over its owner's shoulder.

Then, piercingly, for the first time in his life, from little lips freed at last of fear or shy evasion, there came one word between foe and foe.

It was protective.

"Gan-pa!" was all like a wail.

In the start it produced among them, the ax was lowered shiveringly. His old eyes changed for one brief second.

Then he was himself again.

Before any one well realized what had occurred, a man stepped from the house beyond them, and stood negatively a few feet away. His face expressed little of all he was doubtless striving to control. As for the atmosphere in which he stood, it was a disintegration, yet holding properties of the absolute surface calm of his dwelling.

He did not seem to see his child.

In another instant he had also mounted the little incline upon which the Maj'r stood.

He had on the ordinary cow-boy rig, with

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modifications. His deep-set eyes were more unfathomable than ever. In his right hand, which had once been able to lass' the toughest bull at any round-up, something was clutched—white, like a little piece of paper. The other hand was empty.

Yet as he stood so (unarmed, his environment accidentally pitiable, a child paralyzed with fear close beside him, and twenty feet off or so, his wife), he seemed their master. The conclusion swept away from the present, from the unuttered accusations on their ineloquent lips, from his child, from that thin, frightened tigress of a woman leaning against his humble door. It went back to when long busy days, great silent plains, slumber under one matchless heaven, had made them brothers of one birth and blood. The revolution of feeling was visible, tremendous, vital, strangling almost.

They loved him; he had been their friend. Those who were not so, became sober like half-drowned men who were being worked over, yet the coming-to was hard. Suddenly one wanted to cheer him. It commenced like a little motion never carried, for Shorty had dismounted from his horse. When he went through the gate between them, the only instincts of home in his life were a-tuggin' on to his heart, he'd have said, like little cords as a baby hands was a-pullin'. He shuffled,

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looked slouchy, had his hat pulled low; but between tobacco-stained lips mumbled words crowded sweet, from his very soul, with honey, yet no one heard them:

“My little boy, my little Bax’n,” were these. It is a trick of the memory; mothers do that with grown sons at times.

“Las’ night,” he said, “a Mexican woman died of starvation in town. They said she had no food or no water. A poor mis’able greaser, but died of starvation, an’ a woman, Bax. They had ten young uns, and her husband was turned off from the mill, when it stopped. They hed no way to look around and no one back on them.

“The Chinaman as worked in your own fiel’, my boy, he headed out of town yesaday, driv’n-like wi’ the sand of the storm — only ’gasted coin to his name, ten-cent piece, as kid of Marpens runned inter his mother fur —

“You and I, boy, have went through this country when ’twar barrener than ’tis now, but there was no one save a calves t’ pity. It is a-mixing a women an childer up with the des’lation that counts like. Th’ conditions — better conditions ’n these have ast’d blood of a civilized country, ’r so they tell me. The — the men are a-blamin’ you, my boy. Thet’s it —”

The man addressed did not stir for a second. When he turned, and was not obscured at all by

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Shorty, one could see massive, sweeping changes, as if a lion had been aroused at last.

"Tell them," he said to his father.

"What shall I tell them?" the old man asked.

"Tell them what part I've played through all this," the younger replied. Every muscle in his body was a command; his face was death-like as the bronze mask of some tomb; great swollen cords were on brow, neck, and hands, like whips; his eyes were a-glitter. "Tell them," he repeated; "we are father and son no longer, master and slave no longer, — man and man at last."

He crept nearer unconsciously. As he did, a woman's scream rent the air in protest. He cast a swift look at her, and learning something, stood still.

She was afraid for him, but he did not mind her interference. She was one of the guards of his eternal soul.

In the silence, before the Maj'r answered, some men drove off from the crowd like mad. You could hear the echo of their riding. It was muffled in the dust this instant, the next like a hammer on clanging nails. They said afterward: "When it got down to a family quarrel — why, good-bye." In this country of action, it was more "like hard work doing nothing" in a crisis — that was all.

Bax and his father now seemed alone. They

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did not see the faces of old-time friends, late foes, acquaintances, grouped indiscriminately together. Half had dismounted, and in with the human faces was, now and again, the gaunt, submissive head of a horse.

"I don't bring you to account for the past, for the wreck you made of life to a child. Let my mother's name be dropped. She is dead — as dead to my mercy as you have made her to yours.

"I came back a year ago to your roof. I was dying; you could not have saved me. I am dying now; but you could have been kinder to me, more honorable, more just. You let everything go before your hate of me.

"Yet, when you stood in Wilcox three months ago, covered by the six-shooter of a man you had ruined of all his means, you let me say, 'I am his partner; settle with me, Dick,' and let me go out of a friend's presence, — a coward, lying, dishonorable, a trader on misfortune, a betrayer of trusts! You were willing to hide behind me, despicable a son as I was. I never had a partnership with you. I have worked, been patient for the sake of my wife and my little son. I will be so no longer. To-night — I am going to leave Arizona forever; strangers can see to my burial, other earth hold my paltry clay —"

He gave a great stride forward, but then, re-

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membering that scream of a woman, halted with a crippled magnificence of strength.

"But before I go, there is a debt between us you shall pay to the state, to other sons, in my memory. It shall be given in the name of my child, who is going with me. He is a stranger to you from now on. What the law would give to him, you can give to the country in our name."

He staggered, turned around, and addressed the men before him.

"I appeal to you as my friends," he said, "to protect my father. He will promise to redress any sorrow, any suffering, any wrong caused through us. He will substantiate now for you all I have promised, all I leave unsaid."

The old man stepped forward, and faced him. He had a revolver in his hand. He did not raise it.

"Liar — cur," he cried, holding good control of himself.

Bax opened his hand. It was cramped, and unfastened slowly.

"I have your word in black and white," he said. "You dare not lie before God and my mother. I am giving away my own."

A voice like a snake hissed at him.

"You have no own," it said.

As Bax looked at him, the pistol rose. No

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earthly sound filled the quiet air. The man most likely to break it, stood staring at the mouth of the revolver, for his heart was wounded mortally at last. He tried to raise his hand once in protest, but it would not stir. It was the hand which held the paper.

Then he watched his father.

"Drop that," yelled the Maj'r; "you have no right to it, I say."

The distance between them seemed to have lessened. This accentuated the unyielding fearlessness of the son, the waiting malevolent hate of the father.

"You have no right to it. Drop it, I say." Then the pistol dropped for a surer weapon. The old Maj'r remembered nothing, violating the secrecy of a lifetime.

"Bastard!" he hissed.

Almost simultaneously with this climax, a woman sped from the door beyond them. Bax did not seem to see her. So running, reeling, she fell sobbing at his feet. The sound was distressing.

He felt her mute hands praying to him, pleading with him, assuring him of her love and the child's. Still he said nothing. He saw the men who had known him since he was a little boy. He saw the child, the home he had loved, as he had religion and all his thoughts of good.

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The secret lay bare at last to him. In this moment, ancestry was no blur — a release extraordinary, a conscious wonder.

Then all was blank, quite black.

Out of the entire past, he retained one possession. It could not be wrested from him. It was his *mother*. He shuddered, and the paper fell to the ground. He did not grudge it to the old man who had been his father this long. He was saying words as it went back to its owner, mumbled words which the Maj'r did not, could not hear:

“So this is your love — your love.”

Then, turning, he went to go in. Not one of the fifty men around tried to delay him.

Bax Weffold walked off slowly. He went like a man in a daze. If the Maj'r had fired his threatening pistol, there could not have been less life to that still, checked look on his face.

As he walked from them, one saw the great, haunted, noble form stooping between the shoulders. Mockingly, it attacked the watchers that this had been the great point of resemblance before between him and his father. His head was bared. Men who had known him since he was a little fellow could almost see his mother fondling his hair.

He walked on blindly. Until a woman joined

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him near the entrance, the tragic loneliness had been impossible to comprehend as a part impression, it was so absolute; then it became tremendous. He, this woman, and a little boy entered the door-way together.

When it closed behind them, a sudden cheer swelled and went up toward heaven from strong, yearning throats.

Angels might have smiled at the echo of great joy in it; but the legend says it is God, the Omnipotent, who listens. Thus when the cheer reached heaven, its might had slipped into a woman's sob.

Then all was over.

A LITTLE STORY

OUTSIDE, to the men who waited, one began to speak. His eyes went from one to the other shiftily. He was sizing up the situation, — the eternal principle of good in it, the possibility of a relapse into scepticism regarding Bax Weffold again.

It was Shorty.

He saw the figures which the late disclosure had left inert, awkward, motionless, as if sentiment had slid like an angel amongst them, making these rough, clumsy fellows afraid to speak.

The sun had gained heat, and was glaring, but no one noticed it. Among the more refined of them, hats — mostly of the sombrero order — had come off when Mrs. Bax joined her husband. The men were holding these awkwardly.

They were in all manner of grotesque positions. Presently Shorty's mouth opened. Hard work it had been, my friends. As he talked, he looked at no one. This is the reason; should you who read this care:

A Little Story

"What has ben sed ter-day, can't be forgotted. Pard, when I think of thet woman, I remember thet, and bitter as 'tis t' say aught of her, why, guess she 'd want me to a defend Bax. At least, them is my rec'lections of her. What we say of the dead harms no ones—r'member that."

He was speaking of Mrs. Carl Weffold, every one knew that, the woman who had been to his life, dear reader, what your or my mother was to us.

Campbell stepped forward :

"'Nough said, Shorty, we kin guess the rest, ef we want to. There is none of us cares to intrude on a lady."

"Bax seems like t' be egging me on," Shorty said, quite simply. He looked at the door through which Bax had gone, and so told his story.

"When I fust struck Weffold Range," he said, "I knowed nothing wh'tever of what I am goin' to tell yer, till one night, when we drove fifty miles inter Tombstone for an after round-up celebration, I hearn what s'prised me.

"We boys was a-ripping up the town, and one night, at a music hall, we stumbled agin a chap who was down on cel'bration also, been three years off S'nora way, minin'.

"He got to telling me of an incident as

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happened at his last stay in the set'l'ment. Been a pretty young place then, and a hard name to it, when who should enter the camp one night but a woman. Gawd, one can 'magine her, — big, soft, sad eyes like Bax Weffold's, and little feet and hands, 'cause I've seed 'em, and reg'lar Queen Victor'a air. She was in the forlornest scrape us damn men drive sich-like weak women inter; for, may be I did n't mention, she was a-luggin' a child, — both half-starved, and she proud as hell — for all they was no more an beggars. She'd come to sing in a music hall, — very one we was in that evening. She was a-supporting the child, she told 'em, and there was no sort of talk of a man.

“He said she did her part gamey, sung, got paid for it, went home, nursed her kid; but I thet 've seen her a wife after, cud stake every damn fool hope I ever had of a rich find, pardners, thet only the kid kept her a-living, many th' time.”

He drew a deep breath, looking around on them.

“It was thet woman as was after Mrs. Carl Weffold, old Maj'r's wife,” he said. “The people got less who knowed it. In a land like this, they come and go, and forget things; some died. Bax was the baby. I never let on or spoke to a soul. I only comed home and loved him, poor little mite! Then — he got to love me —”

A Little Story

Shorty halted.

Into every man's soul, filled with bitter hate of the Maj'r, came (for all that) — so great it nearly strangled — almost a sense of what the Maj'r had had to bear, — to love such a woman, sweet as Heaven, sad as night, proud as Hell, — think of it, — her arm around the neck of a bastard young one, and her barren, limp little hand in his, only an eternal profile.

Ah, God knows it is hard, hard to judge.

No one guessed what he was thinking.

Then one sprang in his saddle passionately! It made a harsh little stir amongst them. He may have been your son, best friend, before the country absorbed him. Now he was a cow-boy. Once Bax Weffold had tried to save his soul. The horse rode away. As space passed, this man's face softened; all of its rough negative outline gained gentler, tenderfoot curves once again. He was not aware of it.

Only deep down in his heart did he feel for what he was riding, riding to find some sort of *woman* who would pray that Bax Weffold, bastard, should not die, but get well.

THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB

THE rest of our story can be briefly told, — much of it merely repeated.

It is still related amongst the residents of Hope, that on the second morning after old Carl Weffold's great quarrel with his former son, a man stepped out of their house, just at dawn. He chose the back entrance, and saw, as he looked around him, rough men scattered here and there, as if they 'd had a night's vigil of it. One or two young fellows lay, half sleeping, under their hats on the ground.

The sun was yet very close to the line of the earth, and shed warm, yellow rays on the surrounding country, as if some of the golden glory of Heaven had crept through it, and was striving to justify, in a measure, man's yearning nobility just then.

For the hearts of the watchers were very sad. They saw it was Shorty, who had no other name (or so men told one, from time to time). None tried to guess his message, until he stepped out and closed the door behind him. Then they felt he had made no noise.

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His weather-marked face was as usual. His trousers had slipped below the waist-measure, just as of old ; but the voice was full of a high refinement.

“ Bax Weffold is dead,” he said.

Later, more news came to them, and was whispered muffledly around. How, night afore last, he had seemed to rally after the great bad spell caused by the quarrel ; how man and woman and child and the elephant had gone through that first long watch alone.

Then he had sunk toward morning. Noon-time he had tried to say some words, two of which were “ sweet ” and “ forgiveness.” Then a long unreachable stupor had come, through which love, sound, sight, were all powerless to penetrate. And so, they had thought, he would pass out forever ; but the lingering soul willed it otherwise.

For just as light entered radiantly through their drawn curtains, he had sprung forward, free, at last, shouting :

“ The herd ! the herd ! it is coming.” Lo ! bend your ear and hear it ! the sweeping, surging roar again, but this time his senses played him false, for it was the great long-silent mill of the Garnets starting up at last.

Then Mrs. Bax had laid his body over tenderly.

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She had no hard feelings after he died. She buried him by the side of their little Chicky. She carved the heathen little name herself, because there was no one else so adequate to do it. Two little boards were all ; but when she came to Bax's, she wondered vaguely what the rest should be.

No one living had ever known.

She did not know what to do, just at first. The inclination to leave Weffold involved a few days' good-bye to Bax's grave. She had turned from it, when he was covered first, with a queer little ringing in her dead heart, such as takes hold of even healthy ears at times.

It was a philosophy from the fact of his life having ended, rather than its grief. What does our hate count?

What does our hate count?

She saw her sister after, her few true friends ; but there was only one person whom she really cared to talk to, although he was too young to understand her.

It was Bax's child.

She then tried to plan for him ; but the futurity of their life together was something she could not even grasp, so she could only give him food, and bathe and nurse him in a queer diverting sort of manner that wrung Robbie's heart as she watched her.

She seemed in no haste to leave. When

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Robbie hinted dimly at the cause for this, she said :

“ It is an unuttered feeling of forgiveness, and I am weak enough to presume on it all. I don’t want to see him, but — but I could n’t leave *them* just yet ! ”

The supporting words sounded as if Bax had said them to her, so Robbie accepted it all finally, although there was little to do or understand about it.

She felt, if she had not loved Claude just then, her heart would have been broken. He seemed the one anchor necessary for them all, — the one element not shivered into hopeless little bits. She looked to him and time to bring order out of the ruin again.

Three days after Bax was buried, a new quality crept into the air. Men smiled and said “ Gawd ! ” as they felt it, as we have a habit of saying down here.

It was moisture.

The sun was nowhere to be seen. A little child sat out by a duck-pond, and watched all this gravely. He did not know what to do with himself. He missed his “ poppie,” without knowing the owner of that adored little name was dead, “ gone from him forever,” as we tell the very young. Sometimes, in the midst of his solemn little play, he said the name over and over.

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Once the whole love-fraught little phrase escaped him absently :

“ Me love oo worser nor any sing.”

And no one was there to hear it.

Occasionally he waved at his mother, who stood often in the door.

He did not know why the sun was not shining, anything about earth or sky ; so after a little it occurred to him, it would be nice to find the sun to-day. May be it was hidden up in the mountains. He and his friend, the elephant, went trudging off sturdily.

Mrs. Bax came out after a little, and when she saw that he was missing, let her heart beat and beat until it hurt her. Then she ran after him bareheaded ; but she ran the wrong way.

He had taken the long line on which his poppie had often ridden up toward home at nightfall. It stretched far away to the hills. He walked a long, long time. He grew very sober, but not frightened, as he went.

It was merely being tired. When he got near the foot of the hills, he drew up and looked around him. He did not know which path to choose. The hills lay black ; the ground, which was usually just a dry, white, glaring formation, lay in dark strange shades. He sighed, and went to drop down just where he stood, until he rested ;

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when he started, and gave a shrill, smothered little scream.

A man was sitting at the foot of the mountain nearest, on a rock. He was like the child. He had become very lonely, and had wandered off here to try and find something, — only grown-up people call it peace.

It was old Weffold.

He sat staring at the little boy. He almost forgot that he was not his living grandson, they had kept up the farce so long. The child was surprised to see his grandfather sitting in this wonderful place; but, with the rare intuition of the young, he realized a great change had occurred between them. He was not so fearful as formerly.

The meeting was, in a manner, providential. God had been visiting Carl Weffold heavily. Wronged, cruel, tortured, blasphemous chaos was in his heart until he saw Bax's child that afternoon on the hillside. Then there was a rush as of many waters, and he was a human, erring, conscience-stricken, sad old man, at last.

They went off up the steep path, side by side. It was a path not new, but well trampled, and gradually Carl realized that it was the road to Sharpe's old claim way above them. Yet they saw no sign of it around. He did not believe

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in the search for the sun, but he wanted to take the little one back to his mother.

The day grew darker. It was only four o'clock, but as if it were seven.

Down at the ranch behind them, Mrs. Bax grew wild with fear. She said she could not find her boy.

Messages were sent to the great Garnet mine, and fifty men were sent out here and there. They went as if their hearts were bursting, — the little boy that had once owned the great sweeping country, and now whom the great country owned, "hed allus owned — God bless 'im !

" Pshaw ! "

The day grew wet and cold. The hours passed, and it came to be six o'clock. Then stupid, joyous fellows got on the track, where roaming horses or cows had not lost it, and they made off toward the hill.

They found that lightly covered, abandoned claim of old Sharpe's broken in ; feeble cries were issuing from it.

It was two o'clock when the child had wandered off alone. It was seven past when men with sick, scared faces bore two burdens down the hill. One tried to go along first and break it to the women folks. He stopped when he

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tried to do it, as if he were in a mortal cramp. He said :

“The old man and the little ’un fell — shaft of old Sharpe’s ’bandoned claim. It is all right ; — don’t worry. He is only stunned ; but — the — babby —”

She went out past him to the shivering crowd. She was white, her neck tense, her eyes alone suffering. She did not scream when they showed her the little pale, perfect form and face.

God knew. It was between them.

In her arms, through the rude old gate, over the path, she carried her first-born, until they reached his father’s grave. Then her strength seemed spent, or her journey ended, for she crouched down, and kissed him once passionately — the great waxen lids barely together. So he had lain sleeping on her bosom many a day.

She closed her eyes, raising her face to heaven.

Then very slowly the sky responded, as it were, to her grief. Great merciful drops came down, one by one ; on her, on her child, on her sightless, stricken face were they falling, on the thirsty earth, on Bax, on their little, little baby.

At that she started sobbing. It was raining at last on them all. The men had turned away, inadequate to console her ; but when the heavy drops grew into a shower, Robbie Laurence seemed to awaken passionately.

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Kind arms, pity beyond words, sought to enfold Mrs. Weffold; then a rough hand shot this bolt of joy through her, a coarse hand laid pityingly on her shoulder and hoarse words ripped from the big heart of him :

“He is *livin'*, Mis' Bax, he is livin'!”

Poor old heart, so perfected!—for she thought it was Christ, and ceased weeping, only it was Shorty's voice.

A SWORD LAID BY

IN the days he lay sick unto death, Carl Wef-fold saw a woman's figure moving here and there, like a shadow. It beautified his lonely room, and one night he dreamed it was an angel come to absolve him from his weight of sin. But in the morning she fed gruel to him, so he closed his eyes and tried to pray to some one more lofty.

"Heavenly Father," he sought to say, "let this woman look more kindly on me!" — the woman who fed him the gruel; but God understood it. It was a funny little prayer, but worded, we must remember, by lips long unused to praying. "Heavenly Father," — ever thus, — "let this woman look more kindly on me!"

The woman did all she could. Her pale, calm, kind face, like a mask of patience, was the first thing his eyes saw on waking, the last thing closed to him when he fell asleep, — such a pale, calm, kind face, with no glad young glory of emotion. Poor Mrs. Bax! It was her spirit which served him, so she did not become worn. She cooled his broth, and cooked his gruel, and knew just

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when the bright sun fell on his face, for then the blind was lowered. If a pillow under his head grew hot, she was there to punch it, to lay it aside and put in another. Indeed, her hands often touched him, but then he scarce dared to breathe.

Poor old Johann Carl Weffold! That other woman of his life came back in swift, consuming memories, just as Bax's gentle spirit may have come to that other heart, and again the woman changed his pillow; but this time her hand trembled ever so little. And the Galilean may have smiled,—we do not know Him of late save by pretty pictures, but they look *so* kind-hearted—must have tenderly and as pityingly smiled, for He was putting His peace between them.

Now God did not seem to answer his prayer; so, with his old independence of Heaven, it occurred to old Weffold to plead with that calm gaze for himself. A few words would have done it, a few words buried deep with a miser's care; but the old man was very weak, and weakness makes of us all sorry cowards, so he could not speak to her, but once, in his sleep, he called out something, and she knew.

It was merely this, "I tried to save him;" she half fell toward him, holding her heart.

"You did, you did!" she answered; but the voice was so full of pain and pity he thought it was the angels', and never really knew.

A Sword Laid By

She did not know how to break the news to him, and spent all one morning seeking to invent ways to tell him that little Don was still living; but each time the glorious words tried to rush across her lips, she remembered all the young doctor had said about news being worse than a million microbes; so she just waited, in a dumb, tortured sort of way, full of pity toward him, and an unutterable longing for Bax, for his advice and his presence, and the way he had of stooping lowly, and taking her little feminine burdens from her. They had never been too little or too feminine for Bax.

At last it approached November. It was a cool, calm, pretty November day. There is not much verdure in Arizona, but that day the country looked really green, bright, beautiful, and blessed of Heaven. A woman, clad in black, moved through the lonely rooms of a house, as if she were bidding farewell to it. It was Weffold's, and the woman was Mrs. Bax. She moved around almost ceaselessly, as if she had a motive for so doing.

After a very little, she heard a door close in the distance, so she picked some gloves up mechanically, and went and stood by the window. There were some little marks of the height of a child near it, cut by a man's proud hand, or it would have been simply a calm, kind face without

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much history to it. The marks lent expression to the eyes that one did not care to intrude on, so one looked away.

Some one came into the room as she stood there. He brought that nameless atmosphere with him which surrounds physicians speaking professionally ; she felt she could confide in him, listen to him, even take his advice, without losing from that reserve her position demanded of her. It was the young doctor who had attended Carl Weffold.

"My experiment has failed," he announced simply ; "your father-in-law will be a cripple for life."

She stood staring at him. She held her gloves in her hand, and they seemed to remind her that she was free, about to leave Weffold's forever, or the old nurse instinct of these last three months would have been too strong, and she would have gone to his assistance.

"I have shocked you," the young man continued saying ; "I was shocked myself, cruelly disappointed."

"It was not my nursing," she cried ; "don't tell me it was my nursing !"

He made a swift gesture, negation and reassurance mixed.

"He could not have lived without it, Mrs. Weffold," he said ; "I thought, as I sat in there

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beside him, a good many such things, — of the nights we thought he had stopped breathing, and the days when only your rigid and untiring vigilance kept that wearying delirium down. He has come out of it with his reason, thanks to you. I have feared sometimes his lower limbs were worse than I imagined; but until the rest of the body was strong enough to attempt walking, there was no actual proof of the matter.”

“Ah,” she cried, after a second, “it was not much to save him for —”

The speech ended like a little moan, and she put her face in her hands with one of the old impulsive movements. When it came out, she said weakly :

“Sal will take his meals to his bedside, have his lights lit of an evening, every little thing in place.”

When he was gone, she still stood leaning against the window, her face calm and controlling its under-currents, for there were no passionate accompaniments this time. Presently she said, as if talking to no one, “There will be little things Sal may forget.” She was bothered by the fancy, and went and stood in the hall a minute, so as to breathe better air. Then from the outside there came to her the shrill music of a happy laugh. Her little boy was playing; then, almost before the sound was ended, she laid her hand on Carl

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Weffold's door-knob and entered his lonely room. He was sitting in the centre of it; no one had been there who understood about it, so one of the shades was quite low and cast a gentle gloom about him.

There were little things Sal could not do for him. There are little things it takes a conscience-expert to do.

It wrung her heart all at once. She went over and stood nearer to him, nearer than ever before since he had become wholly conscious. He was bent, old, feeble in appearance, his legs covered by a quilt; she could go far away, but that lonely picture would go with her, and he had saved her child's life.

"I had meant to go away," she said, "to new fields, to work, to new faces. I thought I could leave you to Sal; I — would you like me to stay with you?"

He still found it hard to frame words to her; so, lest she go before speech came to him, he groped out to hold her gown.

ON A CHILD

SOME rich men had arrived in Hope from New York. One could tell they were rich by their manner, and by one of them carrying a dress-suit case, which is irrelevant to a novel, but wondrously funny just the same, — becoming more contributive to humor when taken for a case of revolvers, and transported respectfully by Mr. Campbell, who would not trust any lesser lights with it.

They were quite fat rich men, as is proper, and thought "a little run down to Arizona" sounded well until they struck the first Texan desert. Then, like the famous monarch, they never smiled again until they were safe at a familiar little table at Sherry's, Fifth Avenue, once more, when the whole thing seemed like a ghastly nightmare.

To tell the truth, Claude had been strictly honest in his dealings with the syndicate at home, and had sent them stirring little reports of the disturbance, with soothing little addenda of his own tacked on. These were all read before a fine meeting, and produced an unusual furor amongst the wealthy stockholders, for they

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chanced to have an attack of ennui. In fact, there was an epidemic of it; so one said, What did Dick think of their taking a little run down south, to brush things up a little? And Dick told them it was the very thing they needed. He was quite honest about it, and said "they" frankly, which threw the fat persons off their guard.

He said, putting the mine aside, it would be good for them, for their gout and their indigestion, and he thought their *wives* would be better for it, and gladder to see them when they came home!

He had an evil way of saying that, had Mr. Dick, and then of sighing and of winking after; but Mrs. Dick knew all about him, and did n't care.

So the plan gained favor with them.

Home, he told Mrs. Dick the mine was as safe as Morgan's, but if he did n't play jokes, he could n't stand it. So that is how the great stockholders visited Hope.

I do not know if there are angels deputed to grant jesters' prayers, but when Dick was not otherwise engaged that fortnight, he used to pray earnestly to the Powers that a number of unpleasant things would happen, so his friends might enjoy their financial outing. And when he thought of their several expressions, if Fate were to assist his good intentions, he would go

On a Child

off into paroxysms of hearty laughter, and imagine he was a boy again.

The rich men travelled Hopeward on the Sunset Limited train, and found many kind passengers who made out whist hands with them, so they had a jolly good time of it for several days. But past New Orleans, their spirits began to waver. Lots of people have been to New Orleans, but not so many beyond it, and the whole excursion began to take a certain form of sombre excitement, like the last mile or so before the jungles of Darkest Africa.

In due time they were landed at Short's, as Robbie and Claude had been. It was all new, then, to them, so they could not formulate their very natural surprise before they were packed into a little stage like a New York grocery-wagon and sent jogging southwestward toward the jumping-off place, as they honestly believed. It was all an immense, uninhabited plain, and though they were proud of the United States, as we should be, it seemed large all at once to them, unnecessarily large.

As I have tried delicately to intimate to you, they were quite fat rich men, as is eminently proper, and they could not get out of the little stage save in a body, or they would have, half way out. For the dry country they'd heard so much of got in a hospitable humor, and worked

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up a little cloud-burst right over their metropolitan heads.

When they got good and wet, they lost some of the reserve of a big city, and began to swear at circumstances, just as we poorer folks might have done. They did not do so badly for conventional religious promoters, and it made the driver more free and easy; so he handed back his flask.

They all floated cosily into Hope, as a cloud-burst lends all sorts of romantic interest to heavy country roads, and they called the driver, "dear boy," occasionally, and were otherwise cosmopolitan and cheery until they chanced to look around for *hotels*. There were none visible to the naked eye, even when they were driven up before the Palace. They repeated they wanted a hotel, and the driver said it was one, and they got out, disillusioned. Then they stood looking at it through their glasses, with a pensive hauteur which would have wrung the heart of a New York statue. It was having a monetary symptom, where it did n't do the least bit of good, as if one worked up a case of the measles in a community where they were an every-day occurrence.

Then Dick had prayed that the canned goods they were to eat would be broken suddenly to them, and that some one do a little shooting to stir them up a bit. All of which occurred in

On a Child

a hospitable and not over-done manner. For from their several windows was the sort of scenery which looked as if empty tin cans were Arizona vegetation; and it is not exactly cheering to fêted city appetites. A young fellow from some neighboring ranch put the finishing touches to it. He "shot up the town," as we say down here. He said after, he heard there were strangers present, and so it may have been for their entertainment.

They said they were going home. Things wore on their nerves, and they could not stand it. In ordinary language, they and their commercial ambitions had collapsed. They would only stay two days more.

One of these days they drove around the country. They saw the landmarks with which we are all familiar. They passed Weffold's. It was an immense estate full of unlimited resources, and they had a discussion on it. They said it was a pity such a financial affair as that had to pass out of its founder's hands; it could have no heir. It was like the great city enterprises which invariably failed when transmitted to the care of sons. Even one's reputation was very apt to drift in with the commercial débris to pot. Claude, whom they all remembered as a thin, dark, girlish boy with a fortune, said he thought they were mistaken. He

In the Country God Forgot

was still rather solemn, Claude, but had acquired a wife and a sense of humor lately, which lent dignity to his self-confidence. The wife was self-evident, and gave glowing emphasis to him, but the sense of humor was a souvenir of their courtship, and only disturbed sentimental moments of his personality. Then through some mocking little laugh, some faintly tantalizing smile, some sharp repartee, all public, she threw a plumb line to him, down into his worshipping, tender heart, and Claude was compensated.

So far, life was delicious to him, and should there come a day when he seems hen-pecked to us, as is inevitable, let us go out believing, that she is flippant, indifferent, sharp-hearted, and he should not stand it. Let us do all this, my friends, let us go out leaving their secret to them — her coquetties, her straight little plumb line, his lordly and contented love.

The rich men were mistaken in their judgment, young Garnet said. He wished he himself had been identified with some state's early history; it was an immense and endless honor. He said Arizona had not even begun to creep, less toddle; but there would come a day when great possessions like Carl-Weffold's, rightly guided, would flow back to sustain and protect her. So, were a man forced to leave his own, it were well if he could *elect* his successor; well

On a Child

if he could take a little child with the country, rather than personal possessorship, in his veins; if he could guide the little feet toward universality, mould the little reason to its country's needs, and then sow that country in the little heart, so it spring up love, as the love for a brother.

The rich men listened to him. They thought he had advanced some sound ideas, and suggested he repeat them next day at the big directors' meeting they had called. He excused himself briefly; whereat one of the visitors asked if Claude had any vital objection to *his* using some of the remarks as his own. They were certainly very telling, and of course the future owner of Weffold's — Carl's choice of an heir, as it were — interested them vaguely, in fact, a good deal, if the investment continued laying its golden egg.

Claude's mind had become abstracted; as if in answer to his vehemence, the horizon had framed a picture for him.

Down at the old frontiersman's great gate was a little child being helped on to a solemn donkey by a tall young woman, whose expression was rather unsexed by grief. The rich gentlemen were too far off to see, but her eyes seemed to hold life's tragedy in a nut-shell. They were handsome eyes, with a constant smile for the child before her, like light on a pretty lake, and be-

In the Country God Forgot

neath this was a certain calm, as of an old man asleep under a peaceful paper ; and, invisible, like Robbie's plumb line, was a sentence she said day and night, at little task and noble duty, ever and so forever :

“ I love you, wherever you are ! ”

Eternal as a clock tick, and may be it does not harm the blessedness of God's promise to wish Bax some time heard it, he, as they say down in this country, he who had been “ parted out.”

I have wearied you, my readers. The great men met next day in a directors' meeting, as it was planned they should. They had sent rather imperative summons for Carl Weffold to join them, and the crippled financier sent a suave note in response to them, in his cramped Germanic hand, written in his own deliberate manner, and saying — the owner of Weffold's would appear.

They were well content at it ; he was a millionaire and possessed an interest for them.

Some local celebrities had drifted into the meeting from other camps. There were miners, mine owners, mine superintendents. Mr. Campbell was in his element. He had new over-alls, and talked a good deal to no one. He had cracked a joke at the start, and when it seemed fairly successful, it encouraged him to put it together and re-crack it to each new arrival. “ Ef the *President* could only appear — inpromptu-

On a Child

like — amongst them, Arizona need have no fears, she'd become a State."

It is an *interesting* joke to us, clamoring for our small star to shine on this great glad country, but I cannot analyze its other attributes.

Carl Weffold was the last to arrive. Claude told the rich men to have patience. The old man was able to come, or he would not have said so; but it was rather understood about the country that an accident had left him hopelessly lame. Yet amongst introductions and wearying speeches, he wondered if Carl would keep his word.

The great owner of all Weffold had not meant to fail of appearance. He had started out determined to do as was said, but, half way up the high mine hill, his legs gave out and he slipped harmlessly down on the slaggy ground to hold converse with a cotton-batting elephant about it. This knowing brute suggested that Shorty *carry* them the rest of the way on his shoulders. The intelligent solution occurred, and, as they were accomplishing the journey, the glad sun grew warm, and smiled a handsome blessing on them, on the kind, laboring figure of the rough, old man, on that arch diplomat, the elephant, on the wealthy little sun-burnt owner of old Carl Weffold's mighty range; and when he raised his lips, the sun seemed to kiss them, and so they went on to a directors' meeting.

In the Country God Forgot

Thus it came to pass when the fat gentlemen were at the proper pitch to discuss the future of Arizona, the possibilities of immense irrigation, and other scholarly ideas, the pine door of the mill house opened, and there entered a little child. He was still on Shorty's faithful shoulders, and from this height he saw grim faces break at Carl Weffold's message to them ; from this height he saw a smile come, love and false shame and big tears, all blended, and he smiled back at them radiantly. Then from this height—sweet with love, poor Shorty—he too heard the storm of cheers they sent up around him. For one elaborate little second the great noise startled him with its force—him and his faithful elephant. Then, with a glad little cry, he bent to the friendliness in it, and joined his innocent arms and voice to the mad applause.

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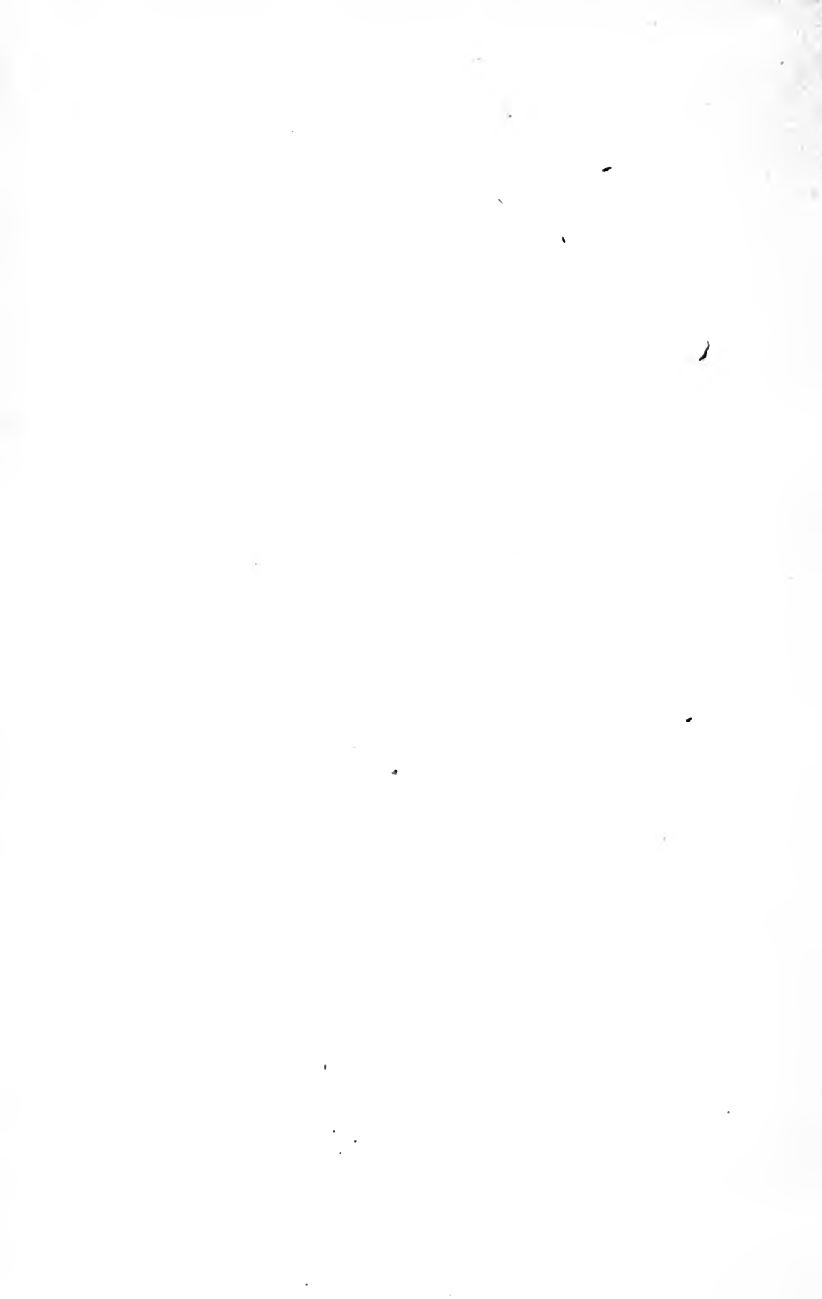
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